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THE TRIUMPHS OF A MAID

BY

ALICE BENTLEY TWITCHELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

GENERAL O. O. HOWARD

F. TENNYSON NEELY, PUBLISHER, NEW YORK & LONDON

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Gen. O. O. HOWARD,
Author of "FIGHTING FOR HUMANITY."

THE

TRIUMPHS OF A MAID;

OR,

"BARBARINE."

BY

ALICE BENTLEY TWITCHELL.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

MAJOR-GENERAL O. O. HOWARD.

F. TENNYSON NEELY,
PUBLISHER,
LONDON, (c 1899) NEW YORK.

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TO

MY MOTHER

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED,

INTRODUCTION.

It was my privilege—for which I shall not cease to be grateful—to listen to the reading of this little book in its manuscript form.

Surprise, joy, sympathy—in fact, all descriptions of emotion—seized and agitated my heart and mind during those delightful hours.

The reading was quiet and natural, befitting the characters in the story, but it had not progressed far before reader and voice were alike forgotten, so absorbed was I by my interest in the story itself.

Parson Primrose and his wife, whom we early meet in the book, have their own marked features. They are of the English type; just enough of oddity about them to pique your curiosity on first acquaintance; opposite in

most things, yet so joined in spirit and heart that they always come together for judgment and action. The parson's good wife lives and thrives by inconsistencies the most unexplainable, yet according with several of my experiences, and with outbreaks that startle you, but it hurts not her conscience a particle to change her mind and shift her ground many times a day.

The child, Barbarine, is the central figure of the work. I am at a loss to name this creation as it rises and stands before my mind. I am inclined to say: "The angelic in child-life," but that is too ethereal—it is rather pure human child-life, such as that our Lord speaks of when He says: "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father in heaven." Yet the creation is not of religion, not even of piety, but of purity; of a force through simplicity permeated with love, that makes itself felt even by rough natures; of a music that not only discourses in sweet harmonies, but that tenderly thrills and touches the soul with uplifting power.

The English maiden lady—the spinster of uncertain years—could readily be dramatized. Her stiffness, her dress, her precise ways and her gentle nature, come to you like a choice picture with a few clever touches. The complete revolution which the child brings into her house is as marvelous as the bird-concert by which Barbarine unites earth and sky. Yet it is wrought without suddenness or shock.

The gradual development of the child mind and heart; the startling influence that Barbarine finally attains; her sudden appearance in public, and her success in fascinating by her music an assembled multitude—it is all there in the book.

This story needs no introduction, no recommendation. Once let the reading public discover it, with its wonderfully strong style, its bold sketches with never a word too much, its chaste and classic diction, and its many positive creations such as only real genius catches and renders, I believe it will have a run like the numerous Scottish character-paintings which have so recently brightened our homes, and

deepened our love for genuine men and women, who live nobly, think deeply, and have real "grit" in their constitution.

I felt from the first that this book was one that I could deeply enjoy, like those of Mrs. Ward, but one so delicate, so harmonious, and still so strong in portraiture that I could in no way properly give it a review, or bring its excellencies to the light. To me the whole work is like the language of songsters that I cannot render, though their choice notes may make my ears tingle with pleasure; like the music of a grand chorus which may move me profoundly, but whose effects I cannot describe, reproduce, or transfer to another soul.

Whatever be the fate of this unique production, it is evident from these words what impression it made upon one mind; and if it touches others as it did me, the authoress need not by it be made proud of the success, any more than the songstress that can sing—or the poet that can write, because such genius is God-given.

So one may be made happy by using the

instrument which God's great love has furnished to make His world better.

O. O. HOWARD,
Major-General U. S. Army (Retired).

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THE TRIUMPHS OF A MAID.

CHAPTER I.

PARSON PRIMROSE ENCOUNTERS THE HEROINE.

"Hi! there! git out of the way! keep your eyes peeled there! Great thunder and turf!" shouted the blustering voice of a London drayman, as he cracked his whip in the direction of a small bit of a girl who was trying to cross the crowded street.

"What a horrible oath!" murmured Parson Primrose, as he thrust his person between the frightened child and the menacing wagon wheels,

"Hold now, child," he continued, looking down into the wide, startled eyes, "we'll be safely across in a minute."

Then drawing from his pocket a small tract, he presented it with much dignity to the blustering drayman — "And you, sir, will oblige me by perusing this little article on 'Blasphemous Language.'"

The drayman, in a few well-chosen words, relegated the parson and all his appurtenances to a spot especially well described by Dante, where the climate is warmer and less variable than ours. Then he brought the whip into direct conjunction with the flank of his off-horse, and so, with a vigorous forward lurch, the heavy team started from the momentary blockade.

The parson sighed, pocketed the tract, and took the little girl's hand in his.

"Come, my child," he remarked senten-

tiously, "let us stand no longer in the way of sinners."

So they dodged skillfully through the moving mass of carts and cabs, and paused only for a moment on the opposite pavement, before going farther.

It was a rough, windy, and altogether disagreeable day in March, and the traditional London fog was hanging over the tops of the houses. The parson looked at his little companion, and took up a corner of her thin shawl.

"It seems to me you are not dressed warmly enough for this chilly weather," he said kindly, "and isn't this a pretty crowded street for you to be in all alone, hey?"

The child flushed, and drew herself up with a sort of pride which seems to be a characteristic of some of the poorer classes.

"I am quite warm when I walk fast," she

answered. "I want to thank you for helping me across the street; that man was horrid, and I don't believe he is nice to his horses, either. I don't come this way often, but to-night I had to carry home Petie's work, for she is sick and couldn't come herself."

The child was small and delicately formed, with all the natural symmetry and grace of a Highland deer. Her golden hair hung in two long plaits below her waist, and the eyes which looked so gravely up at the parson were large and deep and blue, and were shaded by wonderful black lashes; altogether they were quite marvelous eyes, and the parson asserted the same to himself, as he took in with one pitying glance, the whole little figure.

"But who is Petie, my dear, and what is your name, and where do you live?"

"Petie is my aunt who has taken care of me

since my mother died. My own name is Barbarine, and I live with Petie at 61 —— Lane. But Petie is sick now, sir, and I'm sure I'm very miserable."

This the child said with a mournful little sob, and the blue eyes looking up at the parson suddenly grew dim, and two big tears rolled over the curling lashes.

"There, there, my dear, don't cry; please don't," said the parson, clearing his throat suspiciously: "Run home to Petie, now, and remember you've a friend in Parson Primrose."

So saying he thrust a card into her hand, together with a half crown which he had taken from his inside pocket. With that he nodded briskly, and the two separated. Barbarine going toward the dismal dwelling in —— Lane, and the parson sauntering smartly along in the direction of East London.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. PRIMROSE IS INTRODUCED.

"My dear," said Parson Primrose to his wife that same evening, as they sat together before a cheerful fire in their cozy parlor; "my dear, I fear those tracts of mine, on 'Blasphemous Language,' are not going to be very popular with the lower classes—the classes for whose benefit they were specially written. A big swearing drayman to-day actually refused to accept one. Think of it, Martha, think of it!"

And at the recollection of this indignity the good parson rose up from his chair and commenced a vigorous assault upon the fire, as if for

the time being the drayman in question had risen up before him and challenged him to a single-handed combat.

"The humiliation, Martha, the insult of it, and then not alone that he should refuse the tract, but to have him attack me in person with indecent language! Why, Martha, he actually told me to go to the devil."

"Hush, Peter," said his wife soothingly. "A public man must accustom himself to such inconveniences."

"Inconvenience, indeed!" roared the parson, slapping the dust off his boot with a handkerchief. "Just as if going to the devil were not more than an 'inconvenience!' I call it a positive outrage."

"Well, it is partly your own fault, as I told you in the first place. You should have had some taking title—something up-to-date—

which would catch and hold the public eye, such as 'The Traitor Tongue,' or 'The Fatal Phrase,' or something like that."

Here Mrs. Primrose settled back in the conviction that she had turned an original and highly appreciative sentence.

The parson opened his eyes in honest astonishment! He, the author of "The Traitor Tongue!" could be believe his ears? Was it his wife, the partner of his bosom, who suggested that he—the honored and honorable Peter Peabody Primrose—parson of Bath Parish, should defile his pen, and do violence to the sacred convictions of his soul against sensationalism in all its forms, by courting public favor with a "Fatal Phrase!" The idea was too overpowering for contemplation, so he turned to his evening paper.

After a slight pause, he looked up, and said

rather hesitatingly, "Oh! I failed to tell you, my dear, that I didn't get that dark-brown cheviot cloth this afternoon, because I gave away the half-crown."

"Oh! Peter," replied Mrs. Primrose reproachfully, "how could you! Now Ronald will have to go without any coat."

"In your excitement, my dear, you are saying what is not true," remarked the parson calmly, "for there sits your young son in the other room, clothed with a better coat than any I ever owned at his age."

"Well, of course, Peter, I meant a new coat," retorted his wife. "And I don't think it is very nice of you either, to pick me up like that."

"Pick you up!" laughed the parson, as he slowly insinuated his toes between the bars of the fender, "I assure you I had no such inten-

tion; you are far too heavy," and the parson subsided in silent appreciation of his own joke.

"But speaking of that half-crown, I believe it is well invested; I gave it to a little shivering girl with golden hair, and eyes like an angel's filled with tears, too. She is alone in the world except for an old aunt—Petie somebody—but Petie is sick, and I guess they are pretty badly off."

"You are a heartless wretch," exclaimed Mrs. Primrose. "You should have given her every cent in your pocket, and the clothes off your back! The poor little thing may starve or freeze to death, and then you will be to blame, Peter Primrose."

The parson, who was used to these sudden contradictions, smiled to himself and murmured musingly, "Ah! woman! when shall we ever fathom the depth of thy inconsistencies!"

"Well, we'll have to trust to the Lord about her," went on Mrs. Primrose, in a subdued tone. "And, Peter, you might just make mention of her in the prayers to-night; not but what the Lord knows all about her, but then, aw—you know."

"Yes, my dear, I had previously planned to," replied the parson complacently, as if an interposition on his part was all that was needed to insure special favor from the Divine Powers.

The parson and his wife made a goodly picture of home comfort as they sat together in the firelight of their quiet house, far from the rush and whirl of the great city, and yet near enough to be in touch with all the busy movements of the day.

Mrs. Primrose was the personification of good nature. She had her tempers, it is true, and

quite frequent ones at that, as the parson had reason to know by experience, but they passed quickly away, and were as mere specks on the surface of her genial kind-heartedness.

As to personal appearance, she was short and fat, with a snug double chin resting cozily among the folds of a soft silk kerchief which lay crosswise about her throat.

Mrs. Primrose had never outgrown her adoration for the reverend parson; and the husband of twenty-six years was to her fond heart the same perfect creature that she had supposed him in the days of his early wooing.

The parson himself was naturally less emotional and ardent, but his affections were deep and strong and steady. He was infinitely agreeable in manner, and in interviews he left with people the pleasant feeling of measuring a little more in cubic inches than before.

But the parson's physique! Oh! ye gods of symmetry and grace! could anything be more antagonistic to all your natural laws? Behold a figure, long and lean, whose airy shapelessness makes it seem in some way symbolic of the universe, when it was without form and void!

Some irreverent youth in the parish had once dared to draw a comparison between Jack Spratt and his wife and Parson and Mrs. Primrose; but the parson's good friends frowned severely on the bold youth, and the wicked joke was crushed in its infancy.

But the parson was, indeed, a good man, and as such he was known throughout all the parish. His sermons were not monuments of rhetorical skill, nor were they famed for their clear settling of doctrinal controversies, but he preached the simple gospel in a simple way; moreover

his weekly life was a constant expounder of the precepts which he taught on the Sabbath.

"And now, my dear," said the parson, as he hitched his chair along nearer to the lamp at his wife's elbow, "now we will continue the very interesting and instructive book which was commenced last night, 'Les Misérables.' Are you listening, my dear?"

And the parson began to read.

CHAPTER III.

NUMBER 61——LANE.

NUMBER 61 —— Lane was one of the dreariest, darkest, and most desolate places in all that part of London. There were dirtier and rougher spots, to be sure, but that lane had an air of settled melancholy, which was more pervading, depressing and hopeless than any condition of noisy hilarity could possibly be.

The scrawny, hollow-cheeked children playing in the gutters, were subdued in their merriment, and if one dared to laugh louder than the rest a sudden hush would fall on the little company, as though the relentless finger of Fate were raised in stern rebuke.

Most of the inmates of the lane had known better days. They constituted a part of that pitiable portion of humanity which battles bravely with life, only to fall in the fight while the "fittest" rise. And so they had gone on from bad to worse, until at last they found their horizon bounded by the narrow limits of —— Lane, and their lives devoid of all more pleasurable excitement than the daily round of sleeping and waking, and of eating, when they could afford that luxury.

I often wonder if the different ranks in this world are the results of the various uses of men's dispositions and talents, or a real inequality in their destinies—a solemn question verily, since it concerns God's impartiality.

Number 61 was a much dilapidated frame building of goodly proportions. It might have been, in the days of its halcyon youth, the

dwelling place of a large and prosperous family, but now it had deteriorated into the lowest stage of degradation—a poor tenement house—than which I can imagine no more humiliating drop in the scale of house fortunes.

The roof sloped dejectedly toward the pavement, as though hanging its head for very shame, and the clapboards were blackened and cracked and paintless.

In a small front room on the first floor sat two old crones. A stove occupied one corner of the room, and through its various cracks came, from time to time, gusts of powerful smoke. The floor was innocent of carpet or rugs, but be it said to the honor of 61 —— Lane, that the boards were as clean as a good supply of water and much scrubbing could make them.

The fretful cries of a baby broke discordantly in upon the conversation of the two women.

"I tell you what, Mrs. Brady, it be a powerful bad winter just passed! What with Jamie and the measles, and me with never a day when I ben't most doubled up with the rheumatics, and the old man drunk the biggest half of the time, it do be powerful tryin'."

"So it be, Maria, and none knows it no better than you an' me, who has seen other times, and known what 'tis not to be starvin' an' freezin' 'most like."

Here Mrs. Brady would have gone on in usual fashion to recount the catalogue of her special and individual afflictions, if she had not been interrupted by a low strain of music—a soft, tender sound—which floated down from above somewhere, and might well be thought to come from heaven, if it were possible to hear angel music in our rough world.

"Hush!" said the woman called Maria, rais-

ing her finger sternly. "There's that little violin-gal a-playin' again!"

And the two old women sat rigidly expectant, and the baby stopped its wail, and the various doors of the tumble-down house opened, and figures appeared, listening and wondering and feeling in their hearts, seldom stirred or touched with warmth, the dawning of purer purposes and nobler desires.

The music rose and fell, soft and sweet and sacred, and meanwhile the people listened, and all was still.

Then when the music ceased altogether, the people stole quietly back, and the two rough old women looked at one another in a dazed sort of way, as though trying to harmonize the sordidness of their surroundings with the glimpse of beauty and blessedness they had just seemed to see.

"I think I am in heaven every time I hear that little gal play," said the cracked voice of Maria. "I never heerd tell of no such music on this earth until she come to live on the top floor of this old house."

"Seems like she's an angel straight from the Lord Almighty," chimed in Mrs. Brady. "Such a soft little gentle thing, all full of kindness and such like; she ain't fit for no such place as this, no more than the Blessed Virgin," and the old woman piously crossed herself.

"I knows it," continued Maria. "She oughter have silks an' satins an' ribbons, 'stead of them old calico rags she be a-wearin'. But she can't look bad in nothin' she puts on, nohow."

"And her little soft hands," went on Mrs. Brady. "Why she walks into my sittin' room the other day, Maria, just like a little play-actress queen, and says she, 'Mrs. Brady,' says

she, 'I've come for the baby, whilst you takes a nap,' says she; and with that she lifts up the baby and it stops its cryin', him as hasn't had its mouth shut since 'twas born, comin' six weeks next Friday."

"Well, she be an angel, there ain't no mistakin'," echoed Maria, rocking her body back and forth in assertion of her statement.

"But what the poor little gal will do when that Aunt Petie dies, is more than I'm a-knowing. Not a friend in the world, and Petie like to die any blessed minute! I ain't no great hand at prayin', but I hope the Lord, if there be one, will look after her."

And the old world-sick woman actually saw a bright glistening teardrop on her bony hand.

CHAPTER IV.

STARS—AND A STORY.

MEANWHILE, in a small room, tucked far up under the roof, sat little Barbarine—the violin still in her hands, and her cheek laid lovingly against it.

The room was cheerless and scantily furnished—a few chairs, a chest of drawers, a wardrobe with dismal black doors, and a cupboard showing some dishes and cooking utensils, comprised all the furniture, with the exception of a small stove and a cheap pine bedstead. One window, looking toward the west, gave all the light and ventilation of which the room could boast.

Now the twilight glow crept softly in, and the fading colors of red, purple and pink seemed to mingle and linger about the head of the little girl as she sat in a small wooden chair, drawn up by the bedside.

"Did you like the music to-night, Petie?" said the child, laying down her violin, and feeling for Petie's hands. "You will be better soon, dear, and then I will play that pretty Highland Fling, and I will dance it too. What a good time we will have when you get well again!"

"Yes, little one, it won't be long now before I am well," answered the woman on the bed; but she knew as she spoke that when that time came she would be in a land where sickness is not known. But Barbarine did not realize this, and she laughed quite gleefully as she kissed the poor thin hands.

"How nice our supper was to-night," she went on. "A regular fairy feast—broth and toast and tea; why, surely, Petie, you ought to be well and strong by to-morrow.

"I wish you could have seen the man who gave me the half-crown! He looked just like the Mephistopheles we were reading about, you know, only of course my man didn't wear tights and a cock hat. But he was thin and sort of lean-like, and I know he is good, for his eyes wrinkled up when he smiled, and he looked pleasant all over."

"Are you quite sure, Barbarine, that you have the card put away safely?" inquired the sick woman anxiously.

"Quite sure, Petie," answered the child, drawing the card from her bosom. "Here it is, see? Peter Peabody Primrose, Parson of Bath Parish, East London."

"He must be a good man!" murmured the woman to herself. "He is a parson, and I think I can trust him when the time comes."

"Did you speak?" whispered the child, bending nearer.

"Nothing, dear," said her aunt hurriedly. "Sit closer to me, there, so; and put your head down on the pillow."

Barbarine did as she was bid and the little room was very quiet for a moment, while the shadows crept softly across the floor.

"I'll tell you a story about the stars, Petie; are you too tired to listen?" said the child, after a little time had passed.

"No, dear, I want to hear it. Did you make it up, or have you read it somewhere?"

"I don't suppose it is a very nice little story," answered Barbarine modestly; "but somehow it came to me the other night when I couldn't go

to sleep, and that one star shining through the window seemed so big and real and sort of alive-like.

"And now you must listen, Petie, and make believe I am very old and wise.

"Once upon a time, way up in heaven, the good little angels had a playground right outside the Golden Gate. It was full of flowers, and great growing ferns, and sweet birds and things. Every day the little angels used to play in this beautiful playground, and Saint Peter sat by the gate and watched them at their games.

"The playground had a big board fence all about it, and Saint Peter's strictest rule was that the angels should never climb up on the fence to see what was on the other side.

"One day, Saint Peter was called away into heaven, and he had to leave the little angels all

alone, but he bade them be good and quiet, and play nicely together.

"When he was gone, the little angels thought it would be a splendid chance for them to find out what was on the other side of the board fence, so they flocked to the edge of the playground, and scrambled up to the top of the fence.

"They saw a field stretching out before them, filled with strange flowers, and big red berries, and great branching trees, and rocks which showed strange colors in the sunlight; and then they thought they might go over into the field for just a moment—they wouldn't stay long, and Saint Peter would never know.

"So they jumped down from the fence, and began to wander about. But things weren't half as nice as they had seemed. The rocks with the pretty colors hurt their feet; the big

red berries stained their clean white robes; the briars on the bushes scratched their hands and faces; and great slimy snakes crawled in and out among the flowers.

"The little angels grew very quiet and afraid, and some of them began to cry. They were wondering what they should say to Saint Peter about their torn dresses and their soiled wings, when suddenly they heard some one speak, and lo! Saint Peter was there.

"He looked very stern as he called the little angels to him. They gathered about him, very sad and penitent indeed, with their heads drooping, and their wings folded meekly together.

"Then he told them how very bad and disobedient they had been; and to punish them he took away their crowns and halos, and turned the little angels into stars.

"So now they can never play in the beautiful

play-ground any more; they just shine in the sky all day and all night, and they never go anywhere, except when somebody on the earth dies, and then one of the little star-angels comes down to this world, and carries that somebody's soul up to heaven."

Here the gentle voice stopped, and Barbarine waited for Petie to speak, but Petie was asleep.

Barbarine listened to the quiet breathing for a moment, and then she walked softly across to the window, through which one large fair star was shining steadily in the gathering gloom.

"Dear little star-angel," said the child, pressing her hands passionately together, "I feel so lonely and I—don't—know—what—like, to-night. I wish you would speak to me. I think I will cry; no one will see!"

And the brave little tired child did cry, and nobody saw.

CHAPTER V.

THE PARSON RECEIVES A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

ONE night, not long after the scenes in the last chapter, Mrs. Primrose was roused from a tissue of fantastic dreams by hearing muffled and mysterious sounds outside the window—sounds as though some one was trying to force an entrance into the front door.

She listened a moment in frightened silence, and then, cautiously raising herself on one elbow, she leaned over and shook the good parson.

"Peter," said she, in blood-curdling tones, "there are burglars in the house."

"How nice," murmured the parson drowsily.

"How nice!" quoth Mrs. Primrose, sitting bolt upright, and shaking her double chin in sheer excitement. "How nice, indeed! to lie here and have our throats cut, and our brains blown out, and our bodies thrown into cisterns and wells! Peter Peabody Primrose, I'm ashamed of you."

"Hey!" said the parson, opening his eyes and blinking fast, "What are you saying, my dear?"

"Saying!" replied Mrs. Primrose, "I'm saying that there are burglars in the house, and if you have any regard for the lives of your wife and child, you will bestir yourself and get out of bed."

"Burglars!" echoed the parson, grasping his nightcap, and yanking it violently to one side in his astonishment. "Burglars! Martha! why you must be stark mad. What in the name of

piety and common sense would burglars be doing in our house!"

"The same that they would be doing in any one's else," replied Mrs. Primrose airily. "But are you going to get up, Peter Peabody, or not?"

"Well, my dear, I'll get up," said the parson soothingly. "I'll oblige you in the matter, of course," and forthwith the parson donned a long black robe, and thrust his shivering toes into his carpet slippers.

Just here a low, fumbling sound was plainly heard, arising from the ground floor.

"There," shrieked Mrs. Primrose triumphantly, "didn't I tell you?"

"My dear," said the parson, as he succeeded in finding and lighting a candle, "I must beg that you will repress all violent emotion. On such occasions as the present it is eminently necessary to keep cool, as it were."

The poor lady sank back, white with fear; that Peter Primrose should admit this was an "occasion," confirmed her worst suspicions.

But her attention was attracted by the mysterious movements of the parson; he went cautiously across the floor and locked the door; then he began a series of subtle gymnastics, in which he pounded on the walls, clapped his hands, and in other ways, made as much noise as it was possible for a good parson, sober and in his right mind, to make.

"For heaven's sake," said Mrs. Primrose, suspiciously, "will you tell me what you are doing?"

"Certainly, my dear; I am notifying the burglars, in a simple and effectual way, that I am awake and up."

"Awake and up!" sniffed his wife. "I guess you'll have every one in the neighborhood,

awake and up, too! But do you mean to say, Peter Peabody, that you are going to stay shut up in this room, thrashing around like a loon? Why don't you go boldly forth, and take the burglars by the throat, and get your name in the papers, and be somebody?"

"It's a rather difficult thing, this taking by the throat," replied the parson, somewhat nettled. "But I'll make the effort since you have such bias in the matter."

So the parson wrapped his robe more tightly about him, and stepped gingerly toward the door.

With his hand on the knob, he paused at the sound of a piteous wail from the bed.

"For Heaven's sake, Peter, you don't really mean you are going!" sobbed Mrs. Primrose. "You'll be killed before you cross the threshold. Have you no pity for your wife and child?

Would you leave them without a natural protector in the world? Oh! Peter! I wouldn't have thought it of you!"

"Martha," said the parson, advancing sternly toward the bed, "I wish you would be good enough to state coherently just what you wish me to do in this——"

Here a violent ring of the door bell caused the parson to rise several inches in a perpendicular direction.

He didn't finish his sentence, but instead, he tiptoed across to the window, cautiously opened it, and thrust forth his head.

The night cap, already on the verge of severing connections with the good man's skull, could no longer sustain its equilibrium under the slanting posture of the parson's position. So with a flutter and flash of white, it dropped to the ground at the feet of a mass of shadows,

which gradually resolved themselves into the form of a man, who moved and looked up.

"Good gracious, Martha, I've lost my cap," groaned the parson, *sotto voce.*

"Aw—er—ah! good evening, my friend, what can I do for you?"

Mrs. Primrose, listening with bated breath, heard a strange voice from below, say:

"Is this yer where Parson Primrose lives, of Bath Parish?"

"It is, sir, and I'm the man," answered the parson, laying an index finger against his bosom.

"Wal, sir," continued the voice, "I've come fur to be askin' you to go back wid me to 61 —— Lane. It's a fair to middlin' bad time of night, but Petie's a-dyin'. I reckon you knows who Petie be—the little gal said as how she guessed you would."

"Petie! Petie! let me think!" said the parson musingly. "Oh, yes, I remember, and I'll be ready in a moment."

With that the parson drew in his head and disappeared.

"Here is somethin' you dropped," shouted the man after him; and a second later the night-cap went flying through the window with unerring aim.

"Will you have the goodness to explain this business to me?" demanded Mrs. Primrose.

"It's nothing, my dear, only I am going on an errand of mercy with this man, who has come for me," answered the parson, as he stooped to pick up the cap, and absent-mindedly put it on his head again.

"Peter, you shan't stir out of this house, except over my dead body!" screamed his wife. "That man is just enticing you away in order

to kill you, and then he wants to come back and murder me and Ronald. You shan't stir, Peter Peabody, you shan't, I say."

"Mrs. Primrose, I desire you to unhand me, and save your private theatrical outburst till some time when I am in less of a hurry," said the parson, trying to disengage himself from the grasp which his wife had imposed upon his robe; but finding this effort fruitless, he deftly slipped out of the garment, leaving it in his wife's hands.

"I tell you I am going, and I advise you to be quiet, and take another nap. That poor little girl has sent for me, and I am going. Do you hear, Mrs. Primrose?"

"You don't mean that little girl you gave the half-crown to?" cried his wife, excitedly. "Well, why in the world don't you hurry up, and not stand there talking like a phonograph!

It is sinful to keep that good man waiting out there in the cold."

The parson groaned, but said nothing; albeit he mentally registered the vow that he would add to his litany the next day, "From inconsistency, good Lord, deliver us."

Nevertheless the parson hurried, and it was not long before Mrs. Primrose heard the front door shut with a bang.

"The Lord only knows what's going to happen," sighed the good lady; but in spite of her ignorance, she settled herself comfortably on her side, and speedily fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

A STAR ANGEL COMES TO EARTH.

MEANWHILE the parson hooked his arm into that of the stranger, and the two walked briskly down the street.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," said the parson, "it's such a chilly night, too." And he shoved his shoulders a little more cozily down into his great coat.

"No need for to be sorry 'bout keeping of me waitin'," replied his companion. "I 'ad a consid'able 'ard time a-findin' of the bell; I ain't just up-to-date with them press-the-button things, nohow."

"We heard you quite a while before the the

bell rang, and my wife thought it was a burglar," said the parson, smiling to himself at the recollection.

"Wal, tain't no wonder, seein' as 'ow it was so in the middle of the night, and suddint like. But Petie was took sicker 'bout 10 o'clock, and the young un called my old 'ooman, and Sal she sets up with her for a spell; but suddint she comes and yanks me out of bed, and tells me as how I've got to put my best foot for'ard, and git to your house mighty quick. So I takes down your name from some card or tother, that the little gal gives my 'ooman and here I be."

"I'm sure you're a very kind man," said the parson. "And I hope I can be of some service to this poor woman. But has she no friends or relatives?"

"There ain't none that I knows of." replied the man.

"I never seen no such, till lately. When they fust come to our place—she an' the little gal—there was a big man wid 'em—the young un's father. He was sort of tall and yellar-haired, and pleasant-like when 'e wasn't drunk, but 'e was full as a tank most of the time. The little gal used ter cry and take on, but 'e went away suddint like, an' nobody knows nothin about 'im, Petie an' the young un are consid'able offish 'bout their affairs, an' they never tell nothin' to nobody—I ain't never seen none else with 'em since this man went away, so I reckon they hain't got no friends."

"Are they poor?" asked the parson.

"Wal, I 'low they don't have no great deal of money; Petie used ter do some sort of sewin' work, but she's been sick goin' on two weeks next Sunday. The little gal done do errands off an' on, but she's too little an' delicate-like

to be a-doin' of much. Oh! she's an angel an' no mistakin'! I never seen no one like her! such little soft 'ands and gentle ways like, and a-playin' 'hat violin-thing of hern, till it seems that the walls of heaven 'ad bust clean through."

The parson nodded sympathetically, and mentally turned over plan after plan for the child's welfare, with the alacrity characteristic of his mind, used to philanthropic calculations.

Meanwhile they had reached 61 —— Lane, and a small smoky lamp stared the parson in the eyes, as his guide opened the hall door and ushered him in.

"I reckon you thinks this ain't a palace!" said the man bitterly, as he led the way up the creaking stairs.

Before the parson had time to formulate any fitting or tactful reply, he found himself im-

peded in his movements by a sharp grasp on the arm, and immediately a voice said hurriedly: "Be you Parson Primrose? If you be, come quick!"

"My old 'ooman will see ter you now," said the man, as he turned away; "but I'll be 'andy when you gets through, an' I'll takes you 'ome, seein' as 'ow you ain't iver-much acquainted in these yer parts."

The parson thanked the man for his kindness, and then allowed himself to be led up two more flights of stairs by the "old 'ooman," who lighted his path with the smoking lamp.

Little Barbarine was sitting by the bed when the parson opened the door. Her great blue eyes were filled with a dumb, startled grief.

The parson's heart melted within him, and he went quickly into the room, and knelt down by the bedside.

"God be thanked for your coming; and us strangers so," said the sick woman faintly. "But I couldn't die and leave my little Barbarine all alone in the world. You were kind to her once, sir, and you're a parson, so I thought I could go easier if I could only see you, and ask you to be good to her when I am gone."

The parson took the woman's hand in a warm, encouraging clasp, and they talked together for a long while.

Some papers which had been kept under the pillow were given into the parson's care, and then the sick woman sank back exhausted, and closed her eyes.

Barbarine crept up to the bed and laid her head against the counterpane. The dying woman seemed conscious of the act, for she half raised herself, and said feebly:

"Music, little one; play to me."

So the child, not yet fully realizing the situation, took the violin in her hot little hands, and smiled bravely through her tears, as she began to play.

Gently, like an angel's lullaby, rose the beautiful strains of the "*Träumerei.*"

The parson listened in awe, and the sick woman heard and smiled.

Then there was a movement on the bed; a quick convulsion of the limbs; a sudden twitching of the eyelids; and then all was still. But the smile remained, as though the star-angel in its mission had brought a bounty of that peace which the world could not give.

Barbarine, all unconscious of the change, played on; but the parson saw and understood.

When the last tender tones of the violin had

died away the parson leaned reverently over the bed, and folded the still, white hands.

A sudden hush pervaded the little room, and then the calm, clear voice of the parson said:

"Let us pray."

CHAPTER VII.

A BIT OF PAST HISTORY.

In a small town of Germany, not many years before our story opens, there lived a handsome German lad, young, reckless, and full of daring enthusiasm.

He was the only son of well-to-do parents, who had petted him and indulged him in every whim from his babyhood up. Indeed he was the pet of the whole village, for his face was so fair and his way so winning that all his mates loved him, whether they would or not.

Now it so happened that in this village there lived a quiet English lady with her only daughter, a delicate, brown-eyed creature, shy as a fawn, and full of innocent, girlish grace.

By some strange law of opposition, this gentle brown-eyed maiden was fascinated by the reckless daring of the handsome youth, while he, in his turn, was charmed with the purity and beauty of the girl.

So a courtship began and progressed, aided by the prayers and good wishes of all the villagers.

Time went on, and after a few years the two young people were married. The English mother died, and then they went to live with the German parents.

Everything went happily for many months, but finally the young husband began to grow restless. It may be that his nature was too turbulent, not suited for the domesticity of married life. At any rate he grew tired of the humdrum little village, and suddenly decided that he would be happier amid the gayety and rush of a large city.

So, by the aid of friends, he secured a position as first violinist (for the violin he had a natural bent) in one of the London orchestras, and forthwith he, with his young wife, moved to the great city.

All went well at first. They had very comfortable quarters, and they were happier than they had ever been before.

The wife had an aunt living in London, who came to share their little home.

Soon a fair-haired baby opened her big blue eyes upon the world, and the glad young father and mother named her "Barbarine."

Of course they thought her the most wonderful child that had ever lived; none other had so sweet a little face, such fair, soft hair, or such dainty dimples—and the world smiled with them in their happiness.

But a sad change came. During the heat of

the second London summer the young mother sickened and died, and the husband, maddened by grief, grew reckless and desperate.

His associates, conforming to his bad habits, led him on from bad to worse, till all the manliness seemed to be choked out of his nature.

He soon lost his position in the orchestra, and with it his means of support, except the pittances which he now and then received for occasional engagements in second-class music halls.

The little family had to move from their cozy home, and after taking lodgings all along down the scale of economy—each place registering one degree lower than the last—they finally settled upon two small rooms on the top floor of 61 —— Lane.

In fact, some spark of finer and holier instinct remained in the father's breast, for in

one of his sober moments the whole degradation of his later life rose before him, and he conceived the idea of breaking from his associates and going away somewhere by himself, to see if he might not regain his lost honor and position in the world, and be worthy of his little girl.

The thought no sooner came than it was acted upon, and the broken-down man went away from his home and child, leaving a letter for the little Barbarine, to be given her by her faithful old aunt when she should grow old enough to know and understand about her father.

The letter ran thus:

"DEAR LITTLE BABY GIRL: You are too young to know anything about the father who is leaving you, but when you are older, and Aunt Petie has given you this letter, you will have heard what a good-for-nothing father he was,

"I am going away now, Barbarine, to see if I have not courage and strength enough left to turn over a new leaf and be worthy of you. If temptation is too strong for me, and I fail, you will never see me again, for I cannot be a disgrace to your innocent young life. But if I succeed, I shall come back some day, and then, dear little one, we can be happy together.

"I want you to remember, whatever happens, that I tried; and I want you to love me for your mother's sake, for she loved me faithfully and well.

"I leave you a violin, which I hope you will play when you are older. It is one that I had when your mother and I used to sit in the twilight, and together watch for the stars to come out. I always played the '*Träumerei*' in the twilight, and I hope you will play it too, some day; it was your mother's favorite piece.

"Good-by, little dear one. Pray for your father.

"*Wir hoffen auf wiedersehen.*"

This was in substance the history which the

sick woman told Parson Primrose on the night of her death.

The papers which she gave him were the marriage certificate of Barbarine's father and mother, the record of Barbarine's birth, and the letter which we have just given.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PARSON THINKS.

"PETER, that child will surely die!" said Mrs. Primrose to the parson one afternoon.

"Hey! my dear," answered the parson, starting up from the deep armchair in which he had settled himself for a siesta. "Are you speaking of Barbarine? Why, I thought she was remarkably well, but perhaps you might give her a little pulsitilla—to be on the safe side—nerves you know, and all that."

"Peter, you are such a fool!" replied his wife, with conviction. "There is nothing in the world the matter with the child, and would you have me kill her with your old pulsitilla?"

"I would have you be a little more happy in

your remarks," said the parson sternly. "You tell me in one breath that the child is going to die, and then in the next you declare that there is nothing the matter with her, and forthwith call me a fool for suggesting pulsitilla! You are rather trying, to say the least."

"Well, Peter, I did not mean she was going to be sick or anything like that, when she died, you know," explained Mrs. Primrose lucidly. "I only meant that she was too saint-like to live long, and she would die soon. Don't you —er—see what I mean, Peter?"

"Oh, yes, my dear, it is perfectly patent!" said the parson, smiling broadly. "You have the impression that she is naturally so good that she will die young. Is that it?"

"Just it, Peter. You are so comfortable about understanding things," answered Mrs. Primrose, dimpling sweetly. "But, Peter, you

should have seen the little lamb yesterday, when we came back from her poor aunt's funeral; she never cried a tear or said a word, she just took up that violin and stood there by the window overlooking the graveyard, and played that mournful tune of hers till I was crying like a baby. Then she turned round and saw me, and she dropped her violin and put her two little arms about my neck and said: 'Don't cry, dear lady; I mustn't make you cry, for you have been so good to me, just like God, since Petie died;' and it was enough to draw tears out of a glass eye," sobbed the good woman, as she flung herself tempestuously upon her husband's bosom, causing not a little damage to his prim ministerial shirt-front.

"There, there, my dear; why, this is extraordinary!" quoth the parson, patting her awk-

wardly on the back. "Come, come, be cheerful, my love; be cheerful, as it were!"

Wherewith the dame dried her tears, and the parson mournfully surveyed the long, deep wrinkle, running from right to left, across his immaculate shirt bosom.

"And just clean, too, this morning," murmured he in his soul.

But like all good church dignitaries, he had learned to be philosophical, through much besetting on the part of the world, the flesh, and the devil (represented, as he sometimes said in the privacy of his meditations, by finances, dyspepsia, and wives).

So he gave himself up to more continuous reflection, while his wife settled herself with her sewing on the opposite side of the fireplace, and patiently stabbed away with a piece of thread, a needle many sizes too small, and

through which it would have been easier for a camel to pass than the thread in question.

All idea of a siesta had forsaken the parson's mind. His thoughts flew busily back and forth through the scenes of the past week, and they lingered gently and lovingly with the little golden-haired maiden, whose destiny Fate had so strangely placed in his hands.

He had brought her to the parsonage after the aunt's death, but he knew some other arrangement must shortly be made, for his slender income was hardly sufficient for the needs of his own small family. So he thought and thought and the fire burned low.

Mrs. Primrose's efforts with the needle grew more spasmodic and infrequent, and finally stopped altogether, while her fat double chin settled down upon her chest, and the good dame fell asleep.

Suddenly the parson jumped to his feet with a cry of joy, and clapped his hands enthusiastically together.

"I've got it, Martha, I've got it," he cried.

"Got it! Got what?" said Mrs. Primrose, rousing herself suddenly from her nap. "I guess you have got the last stages of lunacy, Peter Peabody."

But the parson was too much interested in his thoughts to heed the moral shower-bath his wife was trying to inflict, so he went on, triumphantly, "Belinda Spoffard is the person, the very one; I wonder why in the world I didn't think of her before!"

"In the name of goodness, Peter Primrose, will you tell me what you are talking about!" broke in his wife angrily, as she settled her cap with a jerk. "What on earth have you 'got' Belinda Spoffard for? I think this is great

carryings on for a clergyman, and a married man at that!"

"Don't get so excited," replied the parson. "I was simply planning for Barbarine's future, and it occurred to me that Belinda Spoffard might take her, and educate her, and all that, and I should think you would be glad about it, instead of flying into a rage."

"Oh! Peter, I am just delighted," said Mrs. Primrose, taking his hand and patting it affectionately with her soft, fat fingers. "You are just a dear dumpling after all; and now the little thing will be nicely cared for."

The parson quietly surveyed himself in a long mirror opposite and a smile curved the corners of his mouth, for anything less "dumpling" like than the state of his personality, could hardly be imagined, but he put the irony from him, and turned pleasantly to his wife.

"Don't be too sure about conclusions, for we don't know, yet, whether Belinda Spoffard will accept the charge or not. I wish we might keep Barbarine with us, but we can't; we can't and do justice to her, you know."

"If you think Barbarine won't be happy with Belinda, we'll economize in some way, and keep her here," said Mrs. Primrose. "I couldn't bear to have the little thing unhappy, you know well."

"My dear, it is simply impossible," answered her husband, gazing thoughtfully out of the window. "We economize now in every way that we can, and still we barely make both ends meet. And there is Ronald! he is growing up, and will have to go to college before long. No, we ought not to keep her. We could not do right by her, or give her what she deserves. Now Belinda Spoffard has a comfor-

table income, and no one but herself in the world. She is able to provide for Barbarine the way she ought to be provided for, and it will be a good home for the child, if I can arrange it."

"But, Peter, Belinda always seems so stern-like; it makes me shiver sometimes to look at her. Don't you think she might be cross with Barbarine?"

"No, I don't think so; I don't believe any one would be cross with Barbarine; and more than that, I think Barbarine would have a very good influence over Miss Belinda. Miss Belinda has a good heart, you know—all she needs is a little love to soften her, and tone her down. On the whole I think it will be a very happy arrangement, if we can make it, for them both. I suppose I might as well go and see Miss Belinda this afternoon—she will be sure to be at

home on account of the rain—and then, too, I promised to drop in on old Mr. Bellows, who broke his arm; sad case that."

And the parson stretched his own sound members, and proceeded to adorn his person with outer garments suitable for the pouring elements.

Then, with a good-by to his wife, he shut the street door behind him, wrinkled up his eyes at the heavens, raised a huge umbrella above his head, and started on his way.

CHAPTER IX.

BELINDA SPOFFARD—SPINSTER.

BELINDA SPOFFARD was an ancient virgin of unnumbered years. She was sparse and spare, and angular in all her contours; her high cheek bones shone as though polished under their scant covering of skin, and each individual knuckle stood out—a bright glistening ball—on her long, strong hands.

But above all things, in truth as well as metaphor, was Miss Belinda's hair a marvel to her friends. What few spears adhered natively to her crown, were drawn up tightly upon the top of her head, and there surmounted by a mysterious architectural structure of consummate skill—a structure reared loftily skyward

and forming an obelisk of superior height, from which fell two long spiral curls on either side of the spinster's face. These curls had become somewhat faded by constant dangling in the sun, so the shades of those, and the massive topknot and the tightly dressed natural hair in the back, constituted a mild-colored rainbow of various brown tints.

Her dress was commonly of dark material, made in the plainest fashion, and following closely the sharp lines of her bony figure.

But she had another gown—a shiny black poplin—wonderfully created with tucks and ruffles and frills; and every Sunday she took it reverently from a cedar-wood chest, and adjusted it to her person with painstaking care.

There was no other occasion, however solemn or auspicious, which seemed to Miss Belinda sufficient to call for the black poplin. It was

sacred to church alone. As a matter of fact, however, it had plenty of use on those principles only, for Miss Belinda never missed a service. Rain or shine, she was always there, with her antique Bible, her shiny poplin, and her tiny packages of caraway seeds.

Parson Primrose could not be more surprised to find the figure of Jacob missing from the stained glass window than to see Miss Belinda's pew empty.

Yes, she *was* pious, but it was the kind of piety which believes with fanatical fierceness that it can work out its own salvation by prayer and fasting and a strict mortifying of the flesh. It was a piety which takes a gorgeous satisfaction in the hope that those who do not toe the mark in this world will be held up by some sort of hot pitchfork to a sulphurous flame in the world to come.

The parson had tried, once and again, to decorate her peculiar character with the arabesques of faith, hope and charity, but he realized that it needed something more than his exhortations; something different from his Sabbath sermons to accomplish this.

No one in Parson Primrose's neighborhood thought of calling Miss Belinda an "old maid;" the term there suggested a suspicion of jollity, a mild, fat face, good-natured ways, a sleek black cat; neither was "maiden lady" applied to her, for that would instantly summon an imaginary vision of a sad-faced person, gentle, patient and sympathetic, with ready tears and a feeble smile. Spinster she was called, and spinster she was from the crown of her high dressed head to the soles of her broad flat feet.

There was once a time, in the days of her halcyon youth, when her heart beat high with

hope at the attentions of a gay Lothario, who dallied away one summer in the village of her early home. But Providence interposed in the form of a telegram—calling her gay suitor, before declaration, to the bedside of a distant and dying relative.

So the fateful, looked-for words were left unspoken, and through the lapse of time Belinda became Belinda Spoffard, spinster.

Miss Belinda had a moderate but sufficient income; she owned a little home not far distant from the parson's, and there she lived with her maid-of-all-work.

On this particular day in question, Miss Belinda was breaking in a new and very green servant girl. Her last domestic had eloped with a neighboring coachman, and the present kitchen incumbent had been installed only since early morning.

At the very moment when Parson Primrose was shaking some of the rain from his dripping umbrella on her doorstep, Miss Belinda was down on her knees in the kitchen, explaining to this new maid-of-all work the mysteries of an under cupboard.

"For goodness sake, who's that?" exclaimed the spinster, starting into an upright position at the sound of the bell.

But as the maid was unable to give her any information, Miss Belinda stole through the front hall, and cautiously insinuated her head between the lace curtains of the parlor bay-window.

Whereupon she saw the outlines of a long lean figure, wrapped in a drenching black waterproof, and having for headgear a much -drawn down felt hat.

Nothing in these externals suggested the per-

son of Parson Primrose, and Miss Belinda rushed back to the kitchen with full speed.

"Good gracious, Jane, I think it is that agent man who was here this morning, and you go to the door and send him off. Mind, now, you don't let him in on any account."

So the maid-of-all-work sped through the hall, and presented her frowsled head before the astonished parson.

"Good-afternoon," quoth he blandly, making a motion as though to enter. "Is Miss——"

"No, sir, we don't want no patent fly-traps, nor double-action brooms!" broke in the maid, keeping herself wedged firmly into the opening of the door.

"I've come to see—" continued the parson, somewhat started.

"Begone," screamed the maid, as she waved

an index finger in the direction of the gate. "I tell you we don't want no rat-poison nor self-threading needles!"

"Excuse me," said the parson, breaking out into a cold sweat, "I wish to speak with Miss——"

"Take yourself off," shouted the excited domestic. "No self-acting dust-pans, nor stomach pumps, nor darning cotton, nor complexion paint. Take yourself off, I say!"

Here the parson raised himself to his full height, and bent upon the girl one of the glares which he had always found so effectual for the conquering of his foes.

"I am Parson Primrose, the spiritual adviser of Bath Parish—will you kindly allow me an entrance and tell Miss Belinda Spoffard that I would like to see her!"

The girl hastily crossed herself, and skurried

out of sight—rushing pellmell into the kitchen, and falling full length over Miss Belinda, who was still on her hands and knees in further explorations of the under cupboard.

"For heaven's sake, Jane, mind your steps!" exclaimed the angry spinster, as she wrenched her topknot back into position after the shock it had sustained.

"Mind my steps! I guess I will!" sobbed the weeping maid. "I'll not stay in a house where I'm told to sass the holy parson!"

"Sass the holy parson!" echoed Miss Belinda, in utter bewilderment.

"Yes, sass the holy parson," cried the angry girl. "Him as you was tellin' me was an agent-man, and me a-sayin' to him as how we didn't want no rat-poison nor baby-food, and he'd better leave quick if he wanted to save his hide."

"Good gracious, what shall I ever do!"

groaned the spinster, collapsing into the nearest chair.

"Why laugh, of course, just as I am doing," said the deep voice of the parson, as he thrust his person through the kitchen door.

Whereupon the parson threw back his head and laughed so heartily that it grew infectious, and soon Miss Belinda joined in, and finally, the maid-of-all-work, till the welkin rang in that prim old kitchen as it could hardly have done before.

Miss Belinda was the first to regain composure, and after putting her hand to her head to be sure that the little spiral curls were properly adjusted on either side of her cheeks, she proceeded to conduct the parson to the parlor.

"Now, really, Miss Belinda, I must insist that you do not take this incident to heart," said the parson, as he settled himself on the

slippery haircloth sofa. "It is really a very good joke, and the mistake was a natural one, I am sure, considering the fact that the girl had never seen me before. She must be a very intelligent person, and well up in the improvements of the day, for I had never heard of half the things she refused to buy. You have a treasure for a maid, Miss Belinda, if she will keep burglars away as valiantly as she does agents."

"I'm terribly mortified about it, Parson Primrose," said the spinster, stroking a huge rose in the carpet with her toe, "but I hope you'll overlook it."

"No reason at all to be mortified, my dear Miss Belinda; pray dismiss it from your thoughts. I shall never think of it again, except as a very good joke;" and at the remembrance the parson laughed again.

"But now for business," he said, checking himself. "I've come on an errand, Miss Belinda, a very important errand," and the parson fingered his watch chain impressively.

"I want you to adopt a little child, and I have her all picked out for you."

"Me adopt a child—me?" gasped the spinster. "Why, whatever are you thinking of, Parson Primrose? I could never stand a child! I would have ingrowing nerves within a week! Mercy!"

"Not with this child," answered the parson, smiling softly. And then he went on to tell the history which we already know, and he drew so tender a picture of the little maid that Miss Belinda found her dried-up old spinster's heart growing strangely warm, and she finally said, but in not too gracious a tone:

"Well, I'll try the child, Parson Primrose,

for your sake, but goodness keep her from having whooping cough or *tic-douloureux* for the Lord knows I'm useless in children's diseases."

The parson, well pleased with the outcome of his call, promised to bring Barbarine the next week; then with a few more kindly words, he went his way.

Just how the next week passed, Miss Belinda never knew. She spent a portion of the time in railing against the world in general and parsons and stray orphans in particular; and then again, she would find herself wondering whether cracked wheat or crude oatmeal was the better suited to the infantile stomach, and about how much milk per day ought to be allowed for the nourishment of hungry waifs.

Wouldn't she want playthings? And at this thought Miss Belinda stole up to the attic, and brought down a broken headed doll and a

highly colored express wagon, which had been the delights of her own far-away childhood. She spent two hours of one afternoon in sewing up the doll's jugular veins and painting in a new eye, but when the task was completed, and the doll smiled blandly upon her in gratitude for a new lease of life, the spinster was so angry at her folly that she laboriously climbed the attic stairs again, and thrust the painted wagon and the smiling doll into the darkest and most cobwebby corner thereof.

So the week passed, and at 4 o'clock of the appointed day the door bell rang, and Jane, somewhat timidly, answered the summons.

Miss Belinda tried to keep her heart from beating faster than was its wont, as she remained stolidly in her chair, with her eyes upon her knitting.

But presently the door from the hall opened, and Miss Belinda looked up to see a little slender form upon the threshold—dainty and graceful as an elf—with a fair face like a flower and eyes like stars.

And the child started toward her with arms outstretched, and before Miss Belinda knew it a low, tearful voice was saying in her ear:

"I've come to live with you; and oh! please to love me a little?"

Parson Primrose, who had been looking on from the hall, saw the spinster's grim face go down upon the child's fair head, and the parson, well content, wrinkled up his eyes at the ceiling, and passed quietly out from the house.

CHAPTER X.

BELINDA DEVELOPS.

WEEKS went quickly by, and the stern winds of March whistled themselves back to the North Pole, or to wherever the place is that March winds come from, and gave way to the soft breezes of an awakening summer.

The scene in Miss Belinda's back yard, one fair June day, was one such as had never before been witnessed in that prim triangle of verdant green. It indicated how matters were.

Miss Belinda was running about through the box-bordered paths, her skirts drawn tightly up from her flying feet, and her face shining with smiles and perspiration. Back of her, in hot

pursuit, was Barbarine, with hair flowing in the breeze, and eyes dancing with excitement.

Jane paused in her kitchen work and looked out the window.

"May the Holy Virgin be blessed! If there ain't Miss Belinda a-playin' squat-tag with that there child!" and she placed her fat arms akimbo, and gave vent to a series of chuckles, the like of which on provocation was entirely unique with herself.

"I declare now," she continued tentatively, "that there child can wind Miss Belinda right round her little finger. I never see no such change in nobody before—such carryin's on, and smiles and babyin's, and when I fust come here it seemed like she wouldn't crack a grin to please the saints, and always a-jawin', and frettin', and stewin'. Now she can't spunk up sprawl enough to say a cross word to nobody.

Why, the other day when that old fellar spilled the milk all over the back steps, she never did nothing except to say as pleasant-like as you please—'Too bad, ain't it!' but a spell ago, before the little kid come, she would have taken him by the collar, and yanked him out of the yard. But, land, if I stand here a-talkin' to myself, I'll never get them windows washed!"

So Jane picked up her dust cloth, and went about her work.

Meanwhile Miss Belinda had succeeded in catching Barbarine as she made a flank movement round the rose bed, and the two sat down, flushed and laughing, on a garden bench.

"Goodness, my old limbs haven't had such a frisking in many a year," sighed the spinster, as she wiped the perspiration from her forehead, and tenderly adjusted the spiral curls, which

in a spirit of coquetry, were dancing up and down behind her ears.

"But don't you think it is fine fun?" asked Barbarine eagerly, laying her head against Miss Belinda's arm. "You see it isn't a hard game to learn; all you have to do is to run around and try to catch me, and if you touch me before I have time to 'squat', then I am 'it,' and I have to catch you.

"I'll teach you how to play 'hop-scotch,' some day—that is nice, too. You draw a square and mark it off into blocks, and then you throw a stone from one block to another, and hop after it on one foot. The one who hops the longest without letting down the other foot, beats, you see."

Yes, Miss Belinda saw; and mentally she caught a vision of herself hopping about on one leg—performing an arc, the starting of

which should be at a prescribed straight line and the vanishing point as far distant as her capacity of lung and agility of limb would permit.

This vision proved so unattractive that she immediately vowed not to let her re-entrance into childhood extend so far as that alluring game of hop-scotch.

"I guess I'll go and see Mr. Bellows, now, Aunt Bee," said the child after a moment's pause. "You know I promised to go there to-day; he is lonesome, I suppose, and his arm hurts him a good deal, but I won't stay long. I'll come back soon, and then we can play some more."

"All right," answered Miss Belinda, rising to go into the house, "and you can take him some of the arrowroot jelly that I made for dinner."

Presently Miss Belinda returned with a neat little basket and the jelly tucked in by a snowy napkin.

"Tell Mr. Bellows that I didn't have very good luck with my jelly to-day, but I will send him some currant wine to make up for it, when it gets worked a little more."

Barbarine had meanwhile picked a few flowers, and these she put on the top of the basket, as she started down the path.

"Be sure and give him my love, and tell him I hope he will be better soon," shouted Miss Belinda after her.

Barbarine nodded and waved her hand, and then a curve in the road hid her from sight.

Miss Belinda stood for a moment, gazing absently over the flowering fields, and then she walked slowly back to the house, saying to herself: "It is a thing of wonder what that little

child has done for me, with her love and her pure heart! I feel as if I was somebody else, and not Belinda Spoffard at all! Belinda Spoffard never could have cared for any one as much as I do for that little girl. She somehow makes things seem as though the spirit of God was always in one's life."

Ah! Love, what wonders are performed in thy name! What creature so mighty in all the world as this little smiling stranger with the shining eyes—this little gentle spirit, coming to us in mysterious ways, and melting our hearts whether we will or not; this little creature right here and yet of some diviner realm called love. Ah! love, may we cling to thee with the faiths of our childhood; may we love thee with the purest passion of our beings; may we accept thee as the guide and good angel of our lives! Love! love! real love.

CHAPTER XI.

BARBARINE MEETS WITH A PROBLEM.

BARBARINE swung the basket to and fro as she walked slowly along the dusty road.

It was too warm to walk fast, and besides, she was very busy thinking. Her naturally grave little face was unusually grave, and her pretty brows were drawn together in a thoughtful frown.

The day before she had unintentionally heard a conversation between Miss Belinda and Parson Primrose, and her childish heart was trying to solve a problem over which the parson himself was standing helpless.

Miss Belinda had been obliged, some little

time previous, unknown to any one, to mortgage her house for the amount of one hundred pounds. And the owner of the mortgage had recently threatened to foreclose, if the full note was not paid before the end of another month.

This was the subject of the conversation which Barbarine inadvertently overheard; and ever since her loving little heart had been busy with the matter, trying in some way to help Miss Belinda out of her difficulty. But with the rare delicacy of a sensitive nature, she hesitated to tell the spinster of her acquired knowledge, lest the mention of it might be an added pain.

To be sure, she did not know what a "mortgage" was, but she knew it was something connected with one hundred pounds, and the getting of the one hundred pounds was the principal thing in her thinking.

Of course the money must be obtained, but

how? Oh! if only she were big and wise, and could do something!

So she walked thoughtfully along, swinging her basket from side to side, and not heeding the sunbeams that played in her golden hair.

"Wal! I declare! ain't you a-goin' to look this way?" said a hearty voice at her elbow.

And Barbarine, turning quickly, saw the fat red face of Mrs. Bellows beaming at her over the garden gate.

"I do believe, Mrs. Bellows, I should have gone right by if you hadn't spoken," said Barbarine, as she put her dainty hand into the soapy one which Mrs. Bellows extended. "I was very busy thinking, Mrs. Bellows, and I didn't know where I was."

"Thinking!" echoed Mrs. Bellows. "For the land sakes, what has a little peach blossom like you got to think about?"

"I have something very big to think about, Mrs. Bellows," answered the child gravely, "and I can't tell any one; I just have to think and think all by myself."

"Mercy! child! how you talk," said the good woman, with an expression of awe. "Any one would think you were your own great-grandmother; but let's hurry into the house, darlin', for Jabe has been as figgity as a wet hen all the mornin', a-lookin' for you. He bust two bandages, and riled himself up into a fever, and I 'lowed I'd have to leave my washin' and set out for you."

By this time they had crossed the little door-yard, and entered the cottage. There were only two rooms on the first floor—in front, a living room, and back of that a kitchen, gleaming with crockery and scoured tinware.

Stretched on a sofa in the living room lay

the old man, one arm in a sling and a bandage round his head. His face brightened into a glad smile of welcome as Barbarine crossed the threshold.

"Wal, here comes my little rosebud!" he cried joyfully. "I reckoned you wouldn't forgit your old man."

"How do you do, dear Mr. Bellows," answered the child, drawing up a low chair to the sofa. "I was coming earlier to-day, only Aunt Bee and I were playing squat-tag, and I didn't know it was getting so late."

"You and Miss Belinda playing squat-tag!" chuckled Mr. Bellows, with a knowing wink at his wife. "Wal! I never!"

"Of course she didn't understand it very well the first time," continued Barbarine innocently. "I'm going to teach her hop-scotch to-morrow."

This was too much for Mrs. Bellows, and she

shook her fat sides in uncontrolled glee. If any one had told her that Saint Peter had taken to dancing hornpipes, she could not have been more surprised than to hear that Belinda Spoffard was playing squat-tag.

"I've brought you some arrowroot jelly, from Aunt Bee, Mr. Bellows," said Barbarine, showing him the basket. "She sends you her love, and says you shall have some currant wine when it gets worked a little more. She is very sorry for you, and hopes you will be better very soon."

Mr. Bellows looked at his wife, and then stammered his thanks. Be it known to the reader that Miss Belinda had never before been known to send any one either arrowroot jelly or currant wine, much less her love!

"I picked you some flowers, too, Mr. Bellows," continued Barbarine with a dazzling

smile. "And if you'll hold up your head, I'll see if you like butter."

So the little girl knelt down by the sofa and carefully insinuated a buttercup beneath the old man's grizzly chin.

"Oh, I can't tell anything about it with that old beard," she sighed reproachfully.

"I reckon you could tell a heap better if you saw me eat a good square meal," chuckled the old man.

"Now with Aunt Belinda it is just as plain as can be—a nice round shadow. She tried it with me once, but she couldn't see anything, because I don't like butter, you know. Well, I must be going now, Mr. Bellows, for I told Aunt Belinda I wouldn't be gone long; but I'll come soon again."

She stayed a few moments longer, talking in her quaint sweet way, and then she tied on her

hat over her golden hair, and shook hands with the old couple.

"Good-by, dears," she called through the open door, "I'll come soon again."

The little springy figure crossed the yard, and the empty basket swung to and fro.

"Wal, Jabe, did you ever expect to see the time when Belinda Spoffard would play hop-scotch, and squat-tag? barin', of course, lunacy and softenin' of the brain?" queried Mrs. Bellows.

"It's passin' strange," replied the old man; "I reckon the days the Psalmist sings of be almost here. Miss Belinda ain't the same mortal creetur since that child came to live with her. If there's an angel in heaven or out of it, it's that child, anyhow!"

And the old man, now comforted, turned his face to the wall, and quietly fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

BIRDS—AND A VIOLIN.

"MARTHA, I think I ought to tell her; I really do; she is young yet, of course, but still she is old enough to understand about it, and I think it is my duty to tell her."

The parson and his wife were taking an after-dinner promenade under their shady trees.

"You see," continued the parson, "he may be dead, and then there would be no need of Barbarine's ever knowing about him or the letter; but we can't tell whether he is dead or not, and so there is always a possibility of his springing up any day or hour, and in that case it would be very awkward all round, if I

hadn't discharged my duty and prepared her for his coming."

"Well, you know best, Peter, of course," answered Mrs. Primrose, "but I should hate awfully to tell that little innocent thing that she had an old scalawag of a father."

"There is no need of representing the case so strongly as that," said the parson reprovingly, as he stooped to straighten a bunch of marigolds which were drooping over the pansy bed.

"And besides, he may not be a—er—scalawag—as you call him—now. We must bind up our loins with charity, as it were, when we speak of these erring ones."

"I haven't any such loins, and I shouldn't bind them with charity if I had!" retorted his wife. "If you think a man has any instincts of honor about him when he would act the way this man has, why we must agree to differ,

Peter Peabody; and if you want to bind up your loins with charity or anything else, you can for all me!"

Mrs. Primrose had a love for the melodramatic, as was shown at times in her speech and gestures. At the present moment the good lady emphasized her remarks by swinging her arms rapidly from right to left, and the parson, bending forward to examine a species of weed in the path, received a violent blow in the chest, which caused the breath in his ministerial lungs, according to hygienic principles, to make its escape with more suddenness than was necessary.

"Mercy! Peter! have I killed you?" cried his wife, seeking his hand affectionately.

"I'm a pretty lively corpse, if you have," replied the parson grimly. "But I will say, my dear Martha, that if you wouldn't be so

violent in your emotions, you would save me considerable discomfort."

"Oh, I'll never be violent again," moaned she. "What do I care about Barbarine's father anyhow! Of course you ought to tell her. I'll tell her myself, if you want me to."

"Thank you, but I guess you would better leave it for me to do," said the parson, smiling, "I suppose I might as well go now and have it over with. It won't be any harder this afternoon than any other time."

"Well, good luck to you, Peter, and don't forget the letter. You'll have to give it to her, you know, if you tell her about her father."

"Yes, I know, and I have it right here," answered the parson, slapping his breast pocket as he went out the gate.

When Parson Primrose reached Miss Belinda's cottage he heard the music of the

violin, coming from the orchard at the rear of the house; so, without ringing the bell, he walked unannounced down the garden path, and presently came upon one of the loveliest pictures his eyes had ever seen.

Barbarine was standing under a spreading apple tree, through the branches of which the sunlight shone with fitful glances upon her dainty head. The violin was held high in her small hands, and one wrist was arched gracefully as it drew the bow over the strings. Her face was wreathed in smiles, and her eyes were bright and wide, and filled with the radiant light of an innocent soul.

The parson paused—as though he had come into the presence of something holy!

Verily, after all, is there anything so sacred in the realm of creation as the clean soul of a pure child, unversed in the world's wild ways,

undefiled by the sin and sordidness of earth-life? What a pity we cannot retain our child-natures, our pure loves, our happy hopes! But with years comes knowledge, and with knowledge comes all too often the disintegration of our holiest beliefs. Happy the man, or woman either, who can walk through the various phases of life, and keep safe and secure the purity and the glad triumphing faith of the childhood days.

Barbarine quickly caught sight of the parson, and turned to him joyfully.

"You must keep quiet for just a minute," she said. "We are having a concert, the birds and I; and it is time now for the thrush to come in for a solo. Hush! don't you hear?" and the child raised the bow from her violin, and bent her head in a listening attitude.

Up in a tree, commencing with a soft, low

tone, and gradually swelling into a full fortissimo carol, rose the beautiful song of a thrush.

It all seemed so strange and spiritual—the angel face of the little girl, and the almost human voice of the wild forest bird, that the parson felt his heart swelling and lifted in a prayer to God.

Soon a yellow warbler began its low "Sweet," "Sweet," then a red-eyed vireo from overhead somewhere took its cue, and started its saucy, "Look at me, don't you see?"

Presently Barbarine put the violin again to her chin, and played as pretty a roundelay as ever witched the ear of man. The birds joined in, and vied with each other in strength and beauty of tone. But suddenly there came a harsh discord from the hedge, a sharp, screeching note, and Barbarine threw down her violin with a laugh.

"It's always that way," she said, pushing the hair back from her forehead; "there's an old cat-bird who lives in the hedge, and just as soon as we get nicely started on that last chorus, he comes in with his horrid screech and spoils everything. He is a jealous old thing, and I suppose it hurts his feelings to know that other birds can sing nicely and he can't."

"Aw—er—do you play to the birds often, my dear?" asked the parson, with the hesitation of a man who sustains conversation in order to delay the introduction of a disagreeable topic.

"Oh! I don't play *to* them, I play *with* them," answered Barbarine. "They used to be afraid at first, and fly away, but I just kept perfectly still and went on playing, and by and by they would come back and listen, and after a while they began to sing, and now we have real concerts every pleasant day. We

have solos, and duets, and choruses; but sometimes that cat-bird just comes in, and then we have to stop.

"Yesterday I dug around in the garden till I found a big fat worm, and then I put it down by the side of the hedge for the cat-bird. Pretty soon he came and got it, and I guess out of gratitude or because he was busy he kept quiet while we practiced; but to-day I couldn't find any worm, though I dug ever so long."

"Are you—aw—through with your concert now, my dear?" queried the parson.

"Yes, all through, but I ought to have stopped before. I am afraid you found it tiresome," answered the child remorsefully.

"Not at all—not at all," the parson made haste to affirm. "In fact I quite regret that you have finished. You would do me a very particular favor if you would continue."

"No," replied Barbarine, "I am forgetting my good manners! Parson Primrose, won't you walk into the house, and I will call Aunt Belinda."

"Really, my dear," said the parson hastily, "I have no desire to see Miss Belinda to-day; as a matter of fact, I prefer not to see Miss Belinda!" then at sight of the perplexity on the child's face, he added, as he wiped the moisture from his brow, "I came to see you to-day, my dear, and—aw—we can just sit down here on this bench for a few moments, cannot we, and talk?"

"Certainly we can," answered the child, wondering at her friend's manner, while she was taking her handkerchief and slapping the dust off of the seat.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARSON DISCHARGES A DISAGREEABLE DUTY.

THE parson sat down; he took off his hat, then put it on again; he placed one hand in his breast pocket, but nervously withdrew it; he crossed first one leg and then the other; toyed with his watch chain; straightened his cravat, and finally, after wrinkling up his eyes at the apple tree, he boldly began his errand.

"Do you remember your father at all, Barbarine?"

"No, Parson Primrose, because he died, you see, when I was a very little baby," answered Barbarine, with an expression of sadness creeping over her sensitive face.

"Now that's just it—or rather, it isn't it at all," amended the parson. "He isn't dead, so far as I know."

"Isn't dead!" broke in Barbarine, springing up and grasping the parson's arm. "Have I a really, truly father, and can I keep house for him and care for him and pour his coffee? But where is he, Parson Primrose? Why isn't he here?"

"My dear little girl," said the parson tenderly, "don't be too eager. I don't know where he is. If I did I should surely go and find him. But I am afraid he isn't just the kind of a father you think he is. You see, when your mother died, he felt so bad and so lonely that he tried to forget himself by doing some of the wrong things which people often do but ought not to do. He was sorry, after a while, and he wanted to be a good man, and a good father to

you, dear, so he thought he would go away somewhere by himself to see if he couldn't do and become better."

Barbarine looked at the parson with wide, startled eyes—her breath came in gasps, and the color quickened and then receded from her pretty face.

"Do you mean," she asked hesitatingly, "that he was a bad man—that he ever got drunk?"

This seemed to Barbarine to be the worst possible shame, and the word came with a sort of sob.

"I cannot say," answered the parson gently, "I never knew him. Your aunt Petie told me about him before she died, and she wanted you to know when you were old enough; so—er—I came to tell you this afternoon," finished the parson weakly.

The child was sobbing now. "Oh, my poor old father! I must find him, and take care of him! Won't you help me, Parson Primrose?"

"Do not cry," said the parson, taking the trembling little figure in his arms. "You must not try to find him, dear—you must just live right here with Miss Belinda, and grow big and wise; then some day maybe father will come back, and he will find a brave little lady waiting for him, all ready to keep house for him and pour his coffee."

Barbarine, hearing these words, sat very still, with her head against the parson's arm. But as the parson looked down, he saw that the little face had grown strangely old and grave, and the big blue eyes had in them a new expression, a something which seemed to say, "We will search together, you and I. We will bring him back, you and I."

The parson uttered a silent prayer for the child. Presently he thought of the letter, and handed it to Barbarine.

She took it and read it slowly through.

When she had finished, Barbarine folded it and tucked it into her dress, then she turned to the parson with a wan little smile.

"It is strange I should always have played the '*Träumerei*,' isn't it?" she said. "That was one of the first things I learned. Petie liked it, and I liked it, too best of all; it seemed to talk to me more than the rest of the pieces, perhaps because dear mother is singing it in heaven."

Then after a pause, she continued: "You are very good to me, Parson Primrose, and I thank you; if ever he comes back, I want you to be good to him, too. I can't talk any more now, because I must wait and think."

The parson rose, and held out his arms to the little girl; she clung closely to him for a moment; while he brushed the golden hair tenderly back from her forehead.

"God bless you, my dear little child," he said.

Then he walked down the garden path, and left her alone with the sunlight, the birds, and God.

As he reached the corner of the house he turned and looked back, for lo! a sound came to him, a soft, tender tone, swelling higher and higher, and bursting at last into the full, sweet melody of the "*Träumerei.*"

In the glory of God's sunshine stood Barbarine, her little hands bravely fashioning the music which her "mother loved," and her eyes dimmed with tears for a father hoped for whose fate God only knew.

The parson bent his head thoughtfully, and then walked slowly through the gateway and down the dusty road toward home, his heart full of the little child he had just left.

CHAPTER XIV.

A "CONFOUNDED FOOL" PLAYS A PART.

In the bay window of an uptown London Club sat two men, early one September evening, slowly sipping their brandy and soda.

The late sun had just set, and the windows in the long row of brick houses opposite the club caught the reflection of the flaming sky, and shone forth a blaze of resplendent glory.

"It's confoundedly awkward," sighed the elder of the two men, as he gazed moodily into the depths of his toddy. "The plans made; four thousand tickets sold; the hall engaged; and every one talking all over town about the appearance to-morrow evening of Mlle. Eulalie,

the violin virtuoso; and here at the eleventh hour I get word that the child has had the infernal bad taste to come down with the scarlet fever. Claudius, for heaven's sake, what shall I do?"

"Beastly poor luck!" answered his companion sympathetically. "Pretty tough on the public, too, to extract from it the price of four thousand tickets, and then go before the footlights and gracefully announce that the star is unavoidably detained by illness. But if the rest of the program is good, and no more diseases develop among the performers between this and to-morrow night, why, perhaps the public will be lenient for this once.

"A great deal depends on the weather, you know—if it should be a night like this, why, you could reasonably expect to find that the people will take their disappointment with some

degree of Christian charity; but if a fog comes on, oh, ye gods! I'll stand behind the scenes with a stiff toddy all ready for you when they hiss you off the stage!" and the speaker threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"There is no such thing as that Christian charity, especially among London audiences," growled the elder man. "They are exact nineteenth century reproductions of the audiences that used to watch the gladiatorial fights. They are never satisfied with any modification of the program, no, not even to save life. They demand precisely what they came to see. And now that I have advertised this little French damsel, and have planned the concert simply for her *début* in London, the public will not limit its anger at her non-appearance simply to hissing me off the stage—it will brand me as a

scoundrel and a liar, and an extortioner of money under false pretenses.

"Oh! why in the name of conscience, couldn't the girl have waited a few days before taking the scarlet fever! I tell you what, Claudius, there is more 'original cussedness' in children than in any other animal. They are eccentric, weird, unprecedented in natural perversity, forever losing teeth, or breaking out in rashes, or swallowing pennies, or pushing buttons up their noses, or something. A well-trained baboon will act better under given circumstances than the average child."

"Rather hard on the little duffers, aren't you?" remarked the younger man, who had a covert fondness for children. "You were a kid once, yourself, and I reckon you can't put your finger on a time when you didn't think yourself superior to a trained baboon. But

seriously, I'm awfully sorry about to-morrow night! I'll dress up in feminine attire and impersonate the fair Eulalie, if you like! I flatter myself I'd be quite fetching in a white satin ball gown, made *à la mode;* and as for hair! I know where I can borrow a false construction which will so enthrall the audience that it will be oblivious to the imperfections of my musical technique. But perhaps the stern female, whose daily ornament it is, might not be willing to part with it long enough for me to make my *début.* What would I do then? I suppose I might pose as a short-haired freak!"

"What a confounded fool you are!" broke in the older man impatiently.

"Me! a confounded fool?" shouted Claudius, springing up and waving his empty glass. "Then here's a long life and deserved success to all fools like me! Sir Henry, to my foolish-

ness is due the bright idea that shall save you from wreckage in the eyes of the London public, and if it hadn't been for the false hair, I shouldn't have thought of it, either! Your reputation as concert manager is rescued. I have a little virtuoso for you, a dainty little golden-haired prima donna, who will outshine the scarlet-fevery Eulalie as the sun outshines the moon!"

"For goodness' sake," growled Sir Henry, "what are you talking about? Is this, too, one of your practical jokes? I warn you I am in no joking mood to-night!"

"Well, I guess not," replied Claudius excitedly. "Come and see whether you think it is a practical joke or not! She lives next door to me, with the false-haired female I spoke of, and she plays the violin superbly.

"I don't know either of them to speak to, but

we can introduce ourselves, and it will be all right. Come along, Sir Henry, there isn't any time to be lost," and the young man impetuously seized him by the arm.

"I won't do anything of the sort," said Sir Henry, drawing back. "She probably looks like a fright, and plays off the key, and doesn't keep time, and acts like an idiot generally. I am going to stop right here, and you can go to the d——l, for all I care."

"All right," answered Claudius, ringing for more of his brandy mixture. "There's nothing more to be said. It's not my concert, fortunately, and so it's none of my concern if it falls flat."

After that the two men sat silent—sipping their toddies, and gazing moodily into the street.

Finally Sir Henry again grew restless; he

nervously moved his chair; coughed once or twice, and in other ways tried to attract the attention of the other man.

But Claudius kept his eyes persistently fixed on the lower left-hand panel of the window.

"Ahem! Claudius!" A pause—no answer—several seconds elapsed.

"Ah! Claudius! how—er—far is it to that house you spoke of?"

"Not very far," answered Claudius, indifferently, with his eyes still upon the panel. "But as long as we aren't going there, there's no need of entering into details."

Another pause—then:

"Claudius—it's a fine evening, isn't it?"

"Very pleasant."

Pause again, during which Sir Henry showed signs of mental agitation.

"Fine night for a walk, Claudius, hey?"

"Is it? I thought you didn't think so!"

"Oh, well, I've changed my mind," spoke out Sir Henry boldly. "And we—er—might just go to see that strange little girl, eh! Claudius?"

Claudius removed his eyes from the left-hand panel, and threw back his head with a merry laugh.

"I knew you'd come round in time," he said.

So he hooked his arm into Sir Henry's, and the two left the club together. Sir Henry had an expression of vaguely returning hope, and Claudius was bearing the air of one who has skilfully performed a duty in that sphere of life wherein it had pleased Providence to place him.

CHAPTER XV.

AND—SO—FORTH.

SIR HENRY HARPER was the last of a long line of Harpers, whose early progenitors had occupied a much beruffled and satin-waistcoated position in the court of the good Dame Elizabeth.

Through the vicissitudes of war and the varying fortunes of time, the Harpers gradually lost their more lordly titles, and came to be plain squires among the landed gentry.

Even the lands at last slipped away, by ill-management and dissipation, until to Henry Harper, the sole surviving relic of the long line, nothing remained but the empty title of "Sir,"

to which he clung with a true pharisaical spirit, thanking God that he was not as other men were.

Sir Henry believed in extracting all the pleasure possible from life, and to this end he nobly bent his energies. Concerning another life he thought little, he knew little and cared less. Religion meant to him the struggle for personal ease and pleasure, and his creed embodied that terse sentence given to us by an old-time philosopher and epicure: "Eat, drink, and be merry." So faithfully did Sir Henry live up to it that none could criticize, at least, his fixedness of purpose.

Being of French descent on his mother's side, he appeared to have inherited a laxity of morals, which seems to be a birthright of gay Parisians.

But if he had not a spotless soul, he had at

least irreproachable linen, which so dazzled the pessimistic spectator with its purity as to demonstrate that a good laundress was of more importance than a clean record.

At the present time Sir Henry held the position as leader and manager of a large Orchestral Company, with a salary suitable to the expansion and development of his epicurean tendencies.

Anomalous as it may seem, when taken in connection with his other characteristics, he was exactly suited for the position which he occupied. He had an accurate ear, fine musical taste, delicate discernment, and all the instincts of a born leader.

Claudius Townly, the younger of the two men, and the constant companion of Sir Henry, was "first violin" in the latter's orchestra.

The friendship of these two was much com-

mented upon, exciting envy among Claudius' fellow musicians, to whom Sir Henry gave hardly more than a passing nod.

Claudius was undeniably handsome, not with an Apollo-like beauty, but rather with that harmonious irregularity which is so much more lifelike.

There was a quiet strength about his dark face which seemed to say that he would be brave in danger and loyal in love—that he could die, if need be, with laughter on his lips and a song in his heart.

The twenty-six years of his life so far had been a strange battling from pillar to post.

He was thrown upon his own resources very early, with no inheritance except a musical cleverness amounting almost to genius, and a knack of making friends.

Several months before the time of which we

speak, he had made the acquaintance of Sir Henry, who had liked him from the first, and as we have said, engaged him permanently as "first violin" in the Orchestral Company.

"Well," said Claudius to Sir Henry, as they paused at the gate of Miss Belinda's cottage, "here we are! And may the gods defend me from your wrath if you don't like my charming little virtuoso!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "FOOL" PROVES TO BE A MAN OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING.

"It is well, Claudius! it is well that you brought me here," said Sir Henry excitedly, as Barbarine laid down her violin. "I have found at last what I have desired all these years, soul, spirit, sympathy—that which makes women become better and men resolve anew. Yes, I have discovered a genius, a gem, a virtuoso! Thank God, Claudius, you have taste and discrimination, you who love the best in art! I believe the music of the old masters lives again in this little girl!"

Barbarine, after playing, had walked over to

Miss Belinda, and the two stood side by side, astonished at such language—such wonderful praise.

Sir Henry turned, and laying his hand upon his heart, he made a low bow before Miss Belinda:

"Excuse me, fair lady," he said with a stately smile, "and so far pardon my excited rhapsody as to reinstate me once again in your gracious favor. I have searched so long for what I have just found that my joy is unbounded—uncontrolled. We lovers of music had fain ceased to hope that the genius and the spiritual interpretation of the better days, live in the players of to-day. But now I know that in my cynical wisdom there lay but folly—for lo! I take a walk on a summer night and I find—what! A little slip of a fair-haired girl, with a spark of mighty fire in her soul,

and an echo of Isrefel's grand music ringing from her fingers. Do you wonder that I feel myself like a boy again? But, gracious lady, I pray thee let me bask once more in the favor of thy smile, else will my joy not be complete."

Miss Belinda was more speechless than ever, while the spiral curls fairly quivered to receive these unwonted compliments.

But Barbarine stepped gravely up to Sir Henry. "Do you mean," she said timidly, "that I play well? That I could make people happy—or—or good?"

"Hear her, Claudius!" cried Sir Henry, turning to the younger man. "Does she play well?"

"Yes, little one," he continued, "you play more than well; you have feeling, tone, inspiration, the spirit of God. You will lift the world right up into heaven, so to speak. Your

violin speaks to the heart, and that is more than any master can teach."

"Now, charming lady," he said, turning to Miss Belinda, "I have a great favor to ask of you. I desire above all things that this child shall play in my hall, to-morrow evening, at a concert given by the London Orchestral Company; and will you grace the occasion by your kindly presence also?"

Miss Belinda stood aghast. Barbarine, her little sensitive darling, stand before the glaring footlights of one of those play-acting places? Never! and the good dame drew herself up grimly, and forgot the charm of those seductive compliments.

"Certainly not, sir," she announced to the waiting Sir Henry. "She has never been in one of those skirt-dancing buildings, and she shan't begin while I have my say."

"But this isn't any skirt-dancing place," chimed in Claudius, apologetically, and stifling his overweaning desire to laugh. "It is simply a large concert hall, and this concert to-morrow evening is to be one of the finest of the season. A little French violinist, Mlle. Eulalie, was advertised to appear, but she has been taken suddenly ill, and so Sir Henry, here, felt in duty bound to make her non-appearance good to the public. I told him about this little Miss Barbarine, and if you will consent to let her take the place of Mlle. Eulalie to-morrow night, it will make her fortune, and also relieve Sir Henry from the embarrassment of the situation."

"Please relent, kind madam," broke in Sir Henry, seizing Miss Belinda's hand. "I must have her play, or my reputation will be ruined; she need only play three times, and she can

choose her own pieces. You may stay right with her behind the scenes, and you shall be treated like the fair goddess that you are. I will pay her any sum you say, one hundred pounds for the one night's performance, if you will consent. That is the very price which the French demoiselle was to have. And little Miss Barbarine—she shall be a star; she shall shine, she shall be *par excellence*, and the great audience, it shall cheer, cheer, cheer, and the bouquets shall fall, and you, fair lady, and this *petite* virtuoso shall wake to find that the world rings with your praises; you shall be famous!"

Sir Henry, in his enthusiasm and earnestness, had emphasized each successive phrase by a strong pressure of the hand which he held.

Perhaps it had a softening effect upon Miss Belinda—at any rate her expression lost its rigidity; but before she had time to speak Bar-

barine crept slowly up, with her big, wide eyes fastened intently on Sir Henry's face.

"I will play," she said decidedly. "And is it quite true that I shall have one hundred pounds, to do just what I want to with?"

"Thank God!" gasped Sir Henry devoutly. "Yes, little one, you shall have one hundred pounds, all for yourself."

Miss Belinda seemed to feel relieved to have the matter thus taken out of her hands; and so after it was settled she relaxed, her face lost its sternness, and she unbent so far as to offer refreshments to the two gentlemen.

"And now," said Sir Henry to Barbarine, a little later, "we must plan about the music. What will you play, *ma petite?*"

"The '*Träumerei*,'" replied Barbarine, quickly; "I will play that, if you please."

So that, and two or three other pieces were

decided upon, and then Sir Henry bowed himself out, after a prolonged and touching farewell over Miss Belinda's hand.

"Well!" said Claudius, as they walked briskly down the street, "how about the 'confounded fool' now?"

"Oh, don't mention that, for goodness' sake, Claudius; I'll never call you names again! That which in my vanity I dubbed a 'fool' has proved to be a man of wisdom and understanding."

And Sir Henry gently and affectionately slapped his companion on the back.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR HENRY MAKES AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE night of the concert dawned clear and bright. A few clouds were massed in the eastern horizon, but they only served as an artistic setting for the grand old moon which sailed majestically through its pathway of stars.

It was a perfect autumn evening, an evening such as London seldom has, cool and quiet and starlit, with a hush and calm as though the world in dreamy rapture had stood still.

—— Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity with a throng of eager, music-loving people. People who gave alike unstintingly of

praise or censure; people who applauded the good and hissed the bad with equal courage and persistency; people who spent their money ungrudgingly, but exacted their money's worth with a sort of Shylock measure; and if, as in this case, the pound of flesh was represented by Mlle. Eulalie, of France, they proposed to get their pound of flesh or else make known their displeasure—the making known of which should cost Sir Henry Harper not a little humiliation.

Down in the front row of the orchestra stalls sat our old friends, Parson and Mrs. Primrose, and Mr. Bellows and his wife, for they of course had learned of the child's new fortune.

Mrs. Primrose was visibly excited, but as this condition was so natural to the lady we need give it no more than casual mention.

As for the parson—he, too, was affected.

His clerical bosom was torn by conflicting emotions! In his soul there was a fierce battle—between pride for his little *protége*, and his inability to decide whether the alluring, many chandeliered, frescoed-walled interior of a public music hall was the proper place for a gentleman of his cloth and character.

But withal, there was after a time a smile upon his face, a smile born of hope and good cheer, and which, if Barbarine could have seen it at that moment, would have given her the courage that she needed.

Old Mr. Bellows sat with his horny hands folded, and his eyes closed, well content to wait. Could he not afford to bide any length of time, if need be; for ultimately was not his little "peach blossom" going to come out before that big, heavy curtain and play before them all?

To Mrs. Bellows this was a novel experience! She seemed to have reached the Sinai of her social ambitions, and she settled back in dreamy contemplation of the magnificence with which she found herself surrounded, the glittering jewels, the flashing lights, the gay gowns and the brilliant women.

Her ethical appreciation of the fine arts was so far overshadowed by her physical love for things gorgeous, that she would have been fully satisfied to sit there all the evening, gazing contentedly upon the unwonted splendor of her condition, utterly indifferent to the fact that others were detecting fine musical harmonies which she dimly perceived as one sees through a glass darkly, or did not perceive at all, or probably did not even realize that there was anything to perceive.

Among the audience there was little of that

whispered conversation which is so common a prelude to the commencement of a program. There was rather a quiet, subdued air of expectancy; a sense of suspended emotion, for did not the audience believe that it was to hear the world-famed Mlle. Eulalie?

Back of the curtained stage came the low tuning of violins, with now and then a louder tone from a cornet or bugle.

Just as the clock struck 8 a side door opened, and Sir Henry, in perfect evening dress, stepped before the footlights.

A faint applause greeted his appearance, which demonstration he acknowledged by a low bow; then, with his left hand upon his heart, and his right fingers toying nervously with a watch-guard, he addressed the audience in this wise:

"Ladies and gentlemen: It is with profound

regret that I make the one announcement of the evening—an announcement which I feel sure, despite what may be your momentary disappointment, will result in your ultimate gain. The Mlle. Eulalie, advertised to make her *début* in London at this place to-night, is lying seriously ill at her home in France, the word of which misfortune I received but yesterday, at too late a time to stop the preparations for the concert of this evening."

Here a hiss came from the gallery, but Sir Henry went bravely on.

"Ladies and gentlemen, even at this late day I have been able to find a substitute, a little virtuoso of rare and delicate ability; and now to you, music-loving people of London, who though severe are yet just, I leave the fate of little Mlle. Barbarine, who takes the place of Mlle. Eulalie to-night."

Simultaneously with the speaking of these last words the curtain rose, revealing the huge orchestra of one hundred men.

Sir Henry walked back to the leader's stand, and taking his baton from the desk, he raised it with one quick, commanding gesture, and before the people had time to realize the fact that Mlle. Eulalie was lying ill in France, they were listening with rapt attention to the first, soft-shrouded movement of the Tannhäuser Overture.

Sir Henry's artistic sensibilities stood him in good stead at this time, for no opening selection could have served more nobly to lift an audience above a spirit of discontent than this grand Wagnerian composition.

When the orchestra broke at last into the magnificent "Pilgrims' Chorus," there came a burst of appreciative applause, and Sir Henry

felt with a sigh of relief that he had already scored a victory—that he, and Tannhäuser, and Mlle. Barbarine together, would be too much for the censorious London "Public."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STAR RISES IN THE MUSICAL SKY OF LONDON.

At the conclusion of the "Chorus," Sir Henry bowed himself off the stage; he returned presently, leading by the hand the slim slip of a girl in a quaint, old-fashioned gown. He piloted her through the orchestra chairs, and left her standing before the footlights, a dainty, delicate child, like a Dresden shepherdess, facing the mighty audience of four thousand people.

Her dress was all of white, a little low on the neck and shoulders, with quaint, puffed sleeves, and a broad satin ribbon tied under the arms.

The lights shone up over the little figure, setting off in bold relief the fair flower-like face with its halo of golden hair. The big blue eyes burned with a frightened, feverish fire, and the small hands clasped the violin tightly.

Not a bit of applause greeted her! Not even a murmur of commendation through all that great house! But the parson bent forward with a steady, anxious look and Barbarine saw him and smiled.

Then the orchestra began with the "*Träumerei*," and presently the little white-gowned child lifted her violin and set out to play. And oh, from the first what playing! It was more like the music of angels in the prophet's vision, so sweet and tender and true it was. The notes dropped from the bow like jewels shining in the sunlight, and gleaming with a thousand varying shades; they rose and fell as the sigh-

ing of a summer wind; they smote the ear as the sound of laughter amid sunshine, and anon they seemed like tears too troublous to be shed.

The lights faded away; the orchestra moved back into obscurity; the walls grew dim and melted into space; the stage rose up, up, up, slowly and majestically, till it ascended unto the very gates of heaven. All the realities of this world to the music-loving became as a great void, and the only thing visible or physical was this one little white-robed figure, standing with the glorified light of heaven on her face, and playing such music as the angels teach.

But the "*Träumerei*" ended, and the realities of life asserted themselves again; there was the stage and the orchestra and the footlights, and there was the little quaint-gowned child, with the violin clasped tenderly in her slender, tired hands.

Perfect silence reigned after the last tone had died away; not a movement—not a sound. But presently a shiver like the wave of a grain field passed over the audience—a sound like a sigh, as though one had waked from too long a sleep. Then came the applause! It poured from throats; it stormed from hands and feet; it fluttered from handkerchiefs; it fell from the galleries, and it echoed and re-echoed from floor to ceiling.

Mr. Bellows stood up in his chair and wildly waved his bright bandana. "Hurray!" he cried, "Hurray!"

His wife plucked nervously at his coat tails, but she might have saved herself the trouble, for each man was so busy cheering on his own account that he had not time to notice the idiosyncrasies of another.

At last, Parson Primrose wrinkled up his

eyes at the chandelier, and blew his nose. There was more actual enthusiasm expressed in this latter demonstration than could be understood by any but a personal friend, one who could appreciate the parson's many peculiarities

As for Barbarine, she knew not what to make of this wild scene. She kissed her little hand, to the audience, and ran off the stage amid the redoubled cheers.

Of course she had to come back over and over again, and she played to them again, twice, three times, gay and tender airs, of flowers and birds, and sunshine.

Ah! Sir Henry! there are Eulalies in the world that you do not know of! There are depths of harmony in a child's innocent soul that you, in your coarser manhoood, cannot comprehend! There are melodies lying latent

in gentle human hearts more beautiful than the old masters dreamed of!

And so the concert went on, and the enthusiasm of the audience grew great.

Barbarine was to play once more, the aria from "Lucia," and so when the orchestra ceased the noisy "Coronation March," a breathless hush welcomed again the little, wonderful child as she stepped to the front.

Then she played and played and played, and her dainty gold-crowned head moved gently now and then, in rhythm with the music, and her big blue eyes shone like twin stars, and her face caught the rapt expression of those angels which Sir Joshua Reynolds loves to paint; till the worldly people, looking up at the stage, wondered if this were not the nearest vision of purity and peace they had ever had in their selfish lives!

Mrs. Primrose applied her elbow to the parson's rib, and pointing an index finger in the direction of the stage, said in a loud whisper—"Look, look!"

There in the background, thrust through a small opening in the fly-door, was the head of Miss Belinda, spiral curls, massive topknot, and all.

As a matter of fact, Miss Belinda was undergoing a state of excitement never before experienced in her placid life! What with the novelty of her surroundings, and the uniqueness of Sir Henry's wild compliments behind the scenes, her virgin heart was well nigh bursting.

The parson was just beginning to appreciate the picture in the fly-door, when some one from behind the curtain evidently seized Miss Belinda and pulled her back, for she disappeared

from her conspicuous vantage ground with unnatural haste.

At last the end came, and Barbarine lifted the bow from her violin. The people cheered and called aloud, and she stood there, smiling, and waving her little hand, as if all unconscious of her sudden greatness.

An usher hurried up the aisle with his arms full of flowers; ladies tore the small bouquets from their dresses, and threw them on the stage.

Roses, violets, and orchids fluttered in profusion about her feet! Some one in the front row threw a light laurel wreath with unerring aim. It fell over her golden head and rested upon her shoulders.

There she stood, crowned with laurel, and covered with flowers, the world at her feet, just a simple, innocent child, with the light of

a great love on her face, and the smile of God shining in her heart.

And so she went away, with her violin and her flowers, in and out through the orchestra chairs, and straight into Miss Belinda's waiting arms at the fly-door.

The parson caught a glimpse of a grim old woman clasping a little laurel-crowned child, and then the door was closed.

Yes, it was a success, the concert; and Sir Henry was saying the same as he put the one hundred pound note into Barbarine's hand.

"Little dear child," he said, "I thank you! You are a marvel! You took us away from here, up, up, and made us see things better and braver than belong to this world! You are, I'm sure, one of God's little spirits! I shall not forget this night; never!"

Then he offered his arm with stately grace to

Miss Belinda, and taking Barbarine by the hand, he led them through a side passage to a waiting carriage.

"Good-night, fair lady," he said, as he raised his hat to Miss Belinda. "And you—little lamb—sleep well."

The next morning when Miss Belinda went down to breakfast, she found underneath her plate a one hundred pound note, and this short letter, written in a quaint, irregular hand

DEAR AUNT BELINDA: I played just for you last night, for I wanted to get the one hundred pounds, so you could pay for that thing you and Parson Primrose were talking about. It begins with 'M,' but I don't know how to spell it.

"I should have been frightened at all the people last night, if I hadn't thought about you and the one hundred pounds, and the thing that begins with 'M,' all the while.

"Your loving little BARBARINE."

When Barbarine came into the room a few moments later, Miss Belinda could not speak to her because of the tears that filled her voice.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN INTERRUPTED SERMON.

PARSON PRIMROSE was in his study, a few mornings after the concert, preparing a sermon for the following Sunday.

Through the open window came the song of birds and the scent of flowers, and between the parted curtains a garden bloomed fair in sight.

The parson's manuscript lay before him on his desk, and now and then he read parts from it aloud, in a slow, thoughtful way, as though wishing to gain the very spirit of his text.

"Justification has its origin in the mercy of God! It cannot lie in the sinner or his moral struggles with self! God's holy will alone can justify him. And what makes God so

merciful to the poor, unjust man? It is His unfathomable love for sinners."

The parson raised his eyes meditatively from the manuscript and sat thinking for a moment; then he went slowly on:

"Oh! my people! think of the many times we sin! Think of the hopelessness of our condition if it were not for the Divine Mercy that excuses and forgives us a thousand times a day!

"And then, beloved, how do we profit by this supreme example? We harden our hearts against our fellow-men; we judge them with coldness and injustice; we magnify their faults and minimize their virtues; we find no pardon for their sins, and we bring many poor souls to recklessness and despair, because we do not let them see in us even one little reflection of the Father's love and mercy.

"What great need there is to be kind, tender-

hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us!

"Oh! my people, I should count my ministry among you one glad triumph if I could but plant within your hearts that brotherly love which Paul speaks of, as being an element of heaven—a love which bears and forbears, and forgets with forgiving; which thinks no evil and speaks no ill; which does not wrap itself about with a mantle of pharisaical complacency, but reaches out unto the sinning ones of all the world, and helps and comforts and strengthens, and hopes on and on."

The curtain blew in from the open window, and the parson looked dreamily out on the flowering shrubs and the long shadows lying on the grass. Then he went on:

"What right have we, my people, to cast stones at our brothers? Are any of us so per-

fect that we should dare rise up in anger against another's fault? Can any of us say, 'There is no mote in my eye?' Let us deal gently with our fellows, dearly beloved; let us fill our hearts with a love which is charitable and long-suffering and forgiving even unto seventy times seven. Let us give—" but the parson left the conclusion of this sentence to the mental ingenuity of an imaginary audience, for at this point he was roused from his religious meditations by a series of frantic yells—"Murder!" "Fire!" "Runaway!" "Police!"

The parson rushed to the window, expecting to see some wild phenomenon, but there was just his wife, at the gate, looking down the road, and shouting lustily as above mentioned.

"For goodness' sake," said the parson to himself, as he hurried anxiously to the front door, "what can be the matter now!"

"Martha! Martha!" he called, "are you mad?"

"No," answered his wife; "but Dr. Brooks' horse is; he's run away; why don't you come out here, and be a man, and do something!"

"I think I had better stay in the house and keep quiet," replied the parson. "You are doing enough for the whole neighborhood! It is plenty to make a horse run away and never come back, just to hear you scream."

"I am not screaming," retorted his wife indignantly. "I am only trying to get somebody to go out and stop the horse."

"Oh! excuse me!" said the parson with a smile. "I thought you were notifying the town in general that there was a fire in the next block, and two or three murders in the immediate neighborhood, and a particular demand for the entire police to appear as soon as possible. But here comes Dr. Brooks himself——"

CHAPTER XX.

A RUNAWAY AND A RETURN.

AT this moment a man came running down the street, his coat-tails flying, and his short fat arms swinging violently to and fro.

He slackened his pace as he caught sight of the parson, and finally paused altogether as he reached the gate.

"You might as well stop here for a while, Dr. Brooks, for your horse has doubtless run into a fence and broken his leg and smashed the carriage by this time," said Mrs. Primrose encouragingly.

"Don't be uneasy," the parson hastened to add, as the doctor glanced nervously down the street; "we'll hope nothing like that has hap-

pened. I am sure some one will stop the team and then drive it back this way to find you, for every one knows your horse."

"Yes, I should think they would," grunted the doctor. "There isn't another such beast in the Land! You can't do anything with her, any more than you could with a three-headed rhinoceros! I hitched her up just now, in front of Belinda Spoffard's, while I went in to see that little Barbarine, and when I came out again there was a broken strap hanging to the post and a cloud of dust down the street. But I'll take the starch out of that horse yet! You wait and see!" and the doctor shook his fist in the direction of the road.

"Is Barbarine sick?" screamed Mrs. Primrose.

"What else should she be, I'd like to know, after that concert business?" growled the doc-

tor. "The strain was enough to make any one sick, much more a little thing like her, who hasn't as much strength as a humming-bird.

"Miss Belinda sent that Smith boy for me, and when I got there I found Barbarine standing up in bed, playing her violin, and beating time with her little feet, and a fever shining in her eyes hot enough to scorch a piece of paper. She didn't know anything at all, and just kept talking about a concert and flowers, and now and then saying something in German which sounded like—'*Wir hoffen auf wiedersehen.*'"

The doctor prided himself on his knowledge of foreign languages.

"Mercy, will she die?" gasped Mrs. Primrose, clutching the doctor's arm.

"Well! I rather guess not!" he replied, drawing himself up, "What am I good for? Let her die? Never, my dear madam, while I have

a bit of skill left in my practice. The world needs that little girl too much—and it needs enough more like her—" he added, half to himself.

"What do you think she did with her concert money? Miss Belinda was telling me to-day. She put the one hundred pounds under Miss Belinda's plate the next morning, with a little note, saying she wanted Miss Belinda to pay for the mortgage with it. It seems that she heard you and Miss Belinda talking about the mortgage one day. Did you ever hear of anything so beautiful and unselfish? Why, it made me feel as though I had never done anything for anybody in all my life. And I made up my mind, then and there, that I would give back the money to old Mrs. Tompkins which she paid me for treating her epileptic son."

"Think of it, Peter, her giving all of that

money to Miss Belinda! Wasn't that lovely?" said Mrs. Primrose, reduced to tears.

"I am not surprised," answered the parson, a beautiful smile overspreading his face. "It is no more than I should expect Barbarine to do. You are right, Dr. Brooks, she is a wonderful child, an ideal setting forth of the divine in child-life! And so you are sure she won't be seriously sick? I am always so afraid of these fevers. And we couldn't possibly spare her, you know."

"Yes, I'm sure," replied the doctor, patting the palm of his left hand with his right index finger in his most professional manner. "She'll be all right in a day or two, if she is kept quiet. The fever had gone down quite a little when I left, and I'll drop around there again in a few hours, if I ever catch that runaway horse—bad luck to him!"

"Why, I believe this is it, coming up the street now," said Mrs. Primrose, shading her eyes with one hand. "Yes, sir, sure enough it is; but who is the man driving, Peter? It is no one we have ever seen about here before."

The parson adjusted his glasses and scanned the stranger coming toward them with the truant team.

He was a large, fine-looking man, dressed with a quiet neatness of style which suggested good taste and the wherewithal to gratify it.

His face, on close inspection, was refined and intelligent, and his blue eyes had in them that expression of restfulness which is only gained by those who have struggled through a great battle to a greater peace.

The stranger paused, and courteously raised his hat as he came to the group at the parson's gate.

"Can you tell me to whom this horse belongs?" he asked with a slight foreign accent. "I caught him as he was running down the street a few blocks below."

"He belongs to me," said the doctor, stepping forward. "I'm much obliged to you, stranger; and here's something for your trouble."

The man drew back from the offered banknote, and the blood reddened his face, as he said: "I never count it a trouble to help my fellowmen."

CHAPTER XXI.

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.

"WON'T you stop a while?" said the parson to the stranger, as the doctor started his little unruly mare in a gallop down the street. "I'll bring out some chairs, and we can sit here in the shade. My sermon was interrupted by the doctor's runaway, and I don't feel in the mood for resuming it just now."

"You are a clergyman, I infer, from your reference to a sermon," suggested the stranger, after settling himself comfortably in the chair which Mrs. Primrose offered. "I wonder if by any chance you might be Parson Primrose, of Bath Parish! I am a stranger in these parts; at least I have not been in London for

some time, and I would like to find the gentleman I just mentioned. I have important personal business with him."

"I am the man," said the parson. "My name is Primrose, and this is Bath Parish," and the parson scanned his companion curiously, as though to determine whether he had an agent to deal with, for the saving of men's souls by electrical methods, or an indigent clergyman searching for a place.

"Is it possible!" promptly answered the stranger, his eyes lighting up. "I shall hereafter go on the hypothesis that Providence exists. And now will you pardon my abruptness if I go immediately about my errand? Do you know anything of a little girl named Barbarine? Some people living at 61 —— Lane directed me to come to you as being the one best able to inform me about her."

Mrs. Primrose gave a visible start!

"Yes," replied the parson, "I know a little girl named Barbarine. She came into my life very suddenly and peculiarly some time ago. She was living then with an aunt at 61 —— Lane. The aunt was sick, and I was sent for, and on her deathbed she gave the child into my keeping, and also what few papers of importance she had which concerned her."

Mrs. Primrose closed her eyes and indulged in a series of daydreams—she concluded that this man was some lawyer, about to announce that Barbarine had fallen heiress to vast estates, and horses, and lands and jewels, et *cetera, et cetera, ad infinitum!*

Meanwhile the stranger spoke again. "Is the little girl with you?" he asked, trying to control the evident agitation in his voice.

"No," replied the parson. "A lady in my

parish has taken her and given her a home. She is a maiden lady, and has no one else in the world to care for. Barbarine is very happy, and has everything that love and thought can provide—and well she deserves it, for a more beautiful child in mind and spirit I have never known. It is like being in the presence of one of God's purest angels to be with her."

"Do you know her history? Have you heard anything concerning her parents?" questioned the stranger anxiously.

"Yes. I understand that her mother died when she was a baby, and her father turned into a miserable, drunken wretch. He went away and left the little girl with an aunt, who took care of her till she died, then Barbarine came to me—that is all of her history, I believe. Her father left a letter which Barbarine was to

have when she was old enough. He said in it that he was going to turn over a new leaf, and if he succeeded he would come back some day. But I never believed in him, to tell the honest truth; I think he has probably drunk himself to death long before this."

The man cringed at such severe words, and a shadow of pain passed over his face, but the parson, after his fashion, was looking dreamily up through the green-leaved trees, and did not see.

"Does she know anything about her father, yet?" went on the stranger steadily.

"Yes, I had to tell her," replied the parson. "I thought she was old enough to have the letter, and so I gave it to her. I am afraid she is grieving all the while, because she is sick now, poor little thing, with delirium and fever, and she keeps saying some German phrase

about '*Wir hoffen auf wiedersehen*,' and that was the last sentence in her father's letter. But if you will pardon me, I would like to inquire why you take so much interest in this little girl?"

"Good God!" cried the stranger, starting up, and grasping the parson's arm, "I am Barbarine's father!"

The parson looked long at the man before him, and a great, glad light slowly broke over his face; he saw the struggles and the triumphs written on the clear brow; he saw sorrow in the eyes and the hope of God shining through the cloud of years! then a great love went out from his heart, as from one comrade to another.

The sunshine and the shadows crept softly about the two men while they talked together and looked into each other's faces—one man feeling the joy of Him who rejoices over each

sinner that repenteth, and the other experiencing the calm tranquillity of a traveler just reaching home, where the struggle of the world seemed at an end.

CHAPTER XXII.

JUBILATE.

It was an early October evening, and the twilight lingered in dreamy glow over Miss Belinda's little garden.

Masses of chrysanthemums raised their proud heads in flaming colors of red and purple and dull gold.

"How beautiful the world is!" said the stranger, as he lifted his hat, and gazed dreamily over the quiet scene. "And what a wonderful thing life is! I never realized it until I found my precious child. Since then I have been the happiest man, I fancy, on the face of the earth, Miss Belinda."

They were sitting together, he and Miss Belinda, in the little garden.

"We have been happy, too," she answered softly. "It is as good as a sermon just to look at Barbarine, since you came back—somehow her face shines the way Moses' did in the Bible story; and every night when she goes to bed she says in her prayers the first thing: 'Dear God, I am so happy! I thank you for my father!'"

"Miss Belinda, what can I ever do to be worthy of her?" asked the man huskily. "Sometimes I feel as though I had no right to her—no right to be in her presence—she is so pure and innocent and holy!"

"I guess we all feel that way," answered Miss Belinda gently. "But we can be worthy enough, I suppose, if we try our very best. She has been a lesson to me, such as I never ex-

pected to have, and thank God, I have profited by it I hope. I love her better than anything, and it is sort of hard for me to realize that she doesn't belong to me any more since you came back." And Miss Belinda finished with a grim look and a sob.

"I don't want you to realize any such thing," said the stranger quickly. "And that is what I desired particularly to speak with you about. I feel that I can never express my gratitude for the love and care you have given to my little daughter—and certainly I should poorly repay your kindness if now I separated you from her.

"No indeed! I feel that you have a claim upon her as great as my own, and I want you to know that we shall never consent to let you make your home anywhere but with us.

"On the advice of Parson Primrose I have completed to-day the purchase of a house not

far from here, and it will be ready very soon for occupancy.

"I have been telling Barbarine about it, and she is all enthusiasm, but will go there only on the condition that her dear Aunt Belinda shall consent to go, too. So is it asking too much that you leave your home and come to us? Barbarine needs you; the house needs you; everything needs you; we want you, Miss Belinda. Will you come?"

The spinster thought at that moment not at all of her garden, her flowers, her orchard—of the quiet and comfort she had loved for so long; she remembered only the little golden-haired child, standing with violin before a mighty audience—and then, reverently and gladly, Miss Belinda answered him, "Yes."

"I want to make over my house to Barbarine," she was saying a moment later. "She

paid the mortgage with her concert money, and I couldn't bear that any one else should have the place when I am gone. Somehow she has made it so different since she came. It seems a part of herself, almost—I can see her in every flower and tree and shrub!"

"Yes, I knew about the mortgage," answered the stranger. "Parson Primrose told me. I am so glad she did it! It is just what her mother would have done in her place. But you must never worry over money matters again, Miss Belinda, for I have more than enough for us all. The world has been strangely good to me these late past years, and I have succeeded in everything I have undertaken. I am going to give Parson Primrose——"

"Who takes my name in vain?" laughed the parson himself, as he and his wife came suddenly across the grass from the gate.

"Oh, ho! eavesdropping, are you?" answered the stranger, smiling and holding out his hand.

"We are very glad to see you," said Miss Belinda, bustling after some chairs. "Will you sit here, or do you think it is too cool?"

"It is far too beautiful to go into the house," replied the parson, raising his hat reverently, as he looked up at the sunset sky. "We won't have many more such evenings, and we ought to make the most of them while they last. But you have not told me, yet, what you were saying when we came!" and the parson turned to the stranger with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well, since you must know," replied the stranger laughingly, "I was just about to tell Miss Belinda that I am going to give you one thousand pounds for your new chapel!"

The parson opened his eyes wide with astonishment, and then he wrung the stranger's

hand, and at the same time from the fullness of his heart, "Thank God!" he murmured brokenly, "Thank God!"

"Yes," cried Mrs. Primrose, starting up, "yes, thank God, and may He thank you. Peter has prayed and hoped and planned over this chapel until my heart has ached; and now—now it can be begun."

But listen, people! for some one is coming. Lean back, good parson, and lift your prayer silently to heaven—open your heart, stranger, and dream of purity and peace.

There down the path, with hair all afloat and eyes shining, comes the singular little girl —nearer and nearer, her violin raised high in her hands, and the "*Träumerei*" again floating out from beneath her fingers.

On and on she comes—her face raised to the evening sky, and her heart with the mother

who may be singing the "*Träumerei,*" even now, in heaven.

And so she reaches the little group under the trees—and her eyes light with a loving smile as they rest on her father.

Then the music changes, and the ancient anthem of the English church rises in joyful measure through the air.

The light grows deeper amid the trailing shadows, the sky darkens and twinkles with stars, the soft breezes lie hushed in the treetops, while clear and glad swell the triumphant tones—

"Jubilate, jubilate,
Jubilate, Amen."

THE END.

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